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المملكة العربية السعودية
وزارة الشؤون الإسلامية والأوقاف والدعوة والإرشاد
مجمع الملك فهد لطباعة المصحف الشريف
بالتعاون مع
الجامعة الإسلامية في المدينة المنورة

SÎRAT AL-NABÎ ﷺ AND THE ORIENTALISTS

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE WRITINGS OF
WILLIAM MUIR, D. S. MARGOLIOUTH AND
W. MONTGOMERY WATT

Vol. I A
From the background to the beginning of
the Prophet's Mission

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**KING FAHD COMPLEX
FOR THE PRINTING OF THE HOLY QUR'AN
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صدر هذا الكتاب بالتعاون بين :

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بالمدينة المنورة

ومركز خدمة السنة والسيرة النبوية

بالمدينة المنورة

الطبعة الأولى

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

مقدمة

الحمد لله رب العالمين ، والصلاة والسلام على أشرف الأنبياء والمرسلين ، نبينا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين. أما بعد :

فيسرني أن أقدم للقراء الكرام هذا المؤلف الجديد في السيرة " سيرة النبي ﷺ والمستشرقون " (العهد المكي) للدكتور محمد مهر علي الذي يصدره مجمع الملك فهد لطباعة المصحف الشريف بالتعاون مع مركز خدمة السنة والسيرة النبوية بالمدينة المنورة .

لقد درس المستشرقون – ولا يزالون يدرسون – السيرة النبوية للنيل من سيرة النبيّ ﷺ المطهرة والطعن في شخصيته. وأساليبهم تتنوع، فأسلوب الهجوم السافر والسب والشتم الذي كان سائداً في القرن الثامن عشر الميلادي حلّ محله الآن أسلوب التعاطف في الظاهر.

لقد حلل المؤلف في هذه الدراسة مؤلفات ثلاثة من مشاهير المستشرقين، وهم: وليم ميور، و د.س. مرغوليوث، ومونتغمري واط، وفنّد مزاعمهم بالنسبة إلى السيرة المطهرة بدقة علمية تقتضيها معالجة مثل هذا الموضوع.

أسأل الله تعالى أن ينفع به، ويجزي خادم الحرمين الشريفين خير الجزاء لجهوده المتواصلة في خدمة كتاب الله العزيز وسنة رسوله ﷺ المطهرة وسيرته الطيبة.

الدكتور/ عبدالله بن عبدالمحسن التركي

وزير الشؤون الإسلامية والأوقاف والدعوة والإرشاد

والمشرف العام على مجمع الملك فهد لطباعة المصحف الشريف

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

FOREWORD

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, and peace and blessings of Allah be upon the Noblest of the Prophets and Messengers, our Prophet Muhammad, and upon his household and his companions.

I have great pleasure in presenting to the readers this new book on sîrah, Sîrat al-Nabî ﷺ and the Orientalists (Makkan Period) by Dr M.M.Ali which has been published by King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur'an, Madinah in collaboration with the Centre for the Service of Sunnah and Sîrah, Madinah.

The orientalists have been studying the sîrah with a view to casting aspersion on the life of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and discrediting his personality. Their approach has differed from time to time. Open attack and vituperation in the eighteenth century have now given way to a seemingly sympathetic approach to his life.

In this study the author has critically analysed the works of three famous orientalists, William Muir, D.S.Margoliouth and W. Montgomery Watt, and has successfully refuted the charges levelled by them against the life and character of the Prophet ﷺ with an erudition which the treatment of such a subject requires.

May Allah make this book useful, and grant the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques ample reward for his ceaseless service to the Qur'an, the Sunnah and the Sîrah.

Dr Abdullah ibn Abd al-Muhsin al-Turki
Minister for Islamic Affairs, Endowments, Da'wah and Guidance
& Supervisor General of King Fahd Complex for the Printing of
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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الحمد لله رب العالمين والصلاة والسلام على رسوله سيدنا ونبينا محمد وآله أجمعين وبعد .

PREFACE

The *Sîrah* and Orientalism is no new subject. In the past as well as in modern times scholars have dealt with it from time to time. Of late some serious studies have appeared on the methods and approaches of the orientalists with regard to Islamic themes in general and the *Sîrah* in particular.[1] Some independent works have also appeared, particularly in Arabic, specifically on the subject of the *Sîrah* and the orientalists. Valuable and useful as these works are, there still remains a good deal to be done in analyzing and evaluating the main orientalist works on the *Sîrah*. Especially it is necessary to take into account the whole range of arguments and evidences on which the views and conclusions of individual scholars are based. The present work is an effort in that direction.

It needs hardly any emphasizing that the views of any individual scholar on any particular subject are scarcely all his own. He necessarily reflects the pattern of knowledge existing in his time and draws and builds upon the results of the researches of his predecessors. To study the work of any individual scholar thus necessarily involves referring to the works of his predecessors. It has therefore been thought more useful to take for study a couple or more of scholars, not contemporary with one another, but whose works cover a certain period of time. On this consideration I have selected for the present study the works of William Muir (1819-1905), D.S. Margoliouth (1858-1940) and W. Montgomery Watt (1909—). The works of these scholars span the period from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day. William Muir's work, *The Life of Mahomet*, appeared for the first time in 1858, while the latest of Watt's works on the subject, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, appeared as late as 1988.

It must be emphasized at the outset that the present study takes into consideration the principal works of the above mentioned scholars on the *Sîrah*, not all their works on all the subjects they have dealt with. Similarly it needs

1. See for instance *Manâhij al Mustashriqîn Fî al-Dirâsât al-'Arabiyyah wa al-Islâmiyyah*, Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf Staes, 2 Parts, Riyadh, 1985.

to be noted that though the present study is concerned mainly with the works of these scholars on *Sîrah*, the works of other scholars have also been sometimes taken into consideration in order to trace the evolution of certain points of view.

The mid-nineteenth century proved a turning point in the orientalists' approach to the *Sîrah*. The new era may be said to have begun on Friday, March 8, 1840, when Thomas Carlyle started delivering his Second Lecture on Heroes and Hero worship. In sharp contrast with the spirit of sheer vituperation which characterized Voltaire's deliverences a century earlier (*Mahomet*, 1742), Carlyle called attention, among other things, to the *sincerity* of the Prophet. Carlyle's hint was taken up by his contemporary and subsequent writers in general. They henceforth stressed the sincerity of Muḥammad (ﷺ) not really to recognize his Prophethood but to suggest, by one device or another, that though he sincerely believed himself to be a Prophet and the recipient of Allah's revelations, he was nonetheless mistaken in that belief, that the whole process was a psychological phenomenon and that the "revelations" he gave out were the result of that psychological process or of his intuition. Thus was Muḥammad (ﷺ) gradually transferred, in the domain of European thinking, from the status of a conscious false Prophet or imposter to that of an unconscious false Prophet or, at best, to that of the victim of an innocent delusion.

Secondly, the mid-nineteenth century witnessed a new phase of intense Christian missionary activities among Muslims under European imperial domination. The exigencies of imperial administration had brought the Europeans into closer contact with the subject Muslim population. This closer contact together with the evangelizing intentions of the time suggested the abandonment of the previous policy of mere vilification of the Prophet and the adoption of at least an apparently logical and persuasive approach to the Prophet of Islam. Carlyle's suggestion thus fell in line with the need of the times.

William Muir's work appeared in the context of the European imperial interest on the one hand and the Christianizing intentions on the other. He was a high official in the English East India Comapny's administration in India. In his private capacity he helped and sympathized with the work of the Christian missionaries in India. Especially he was in close personal touch with the well-known Christian missionary, Carl Gottaleb Pfander, who was then engaged in missionary activities among the Muslims of northern India.

In fact Muir was one of the umpires from the Christian side at the famous Agra debate of 1854 between Pfander and Raḥmat Allah Kêrânawî. The debate evidently turned against Pfander who was transferred by his missionary society (the Church Missionary Society) first to Peshawar and then to Constantinople.[1] As Muir mentions in the preface to the first edition of his work, he undertook its preparation "at the instance" of Pfander. The first edition of the work in four volumes was published between 1858 and 1861. A second edition, excluding the sections on the sources and pre-Islamic Arabia, was published in the early seventies of the century. A third edition of it was published in 1894. A revised version of this third edition, with the inclusion of the section on the sources was published in 1923. Recently, in 1988, the original first edition has been reprinted.

Margoliouth's work appeared at the beginning of the twentieth century. The third and revised edition of his work, under the title *Mohammed and the Rise of Islam,* was published in 1905. This edition has recently been republished in 1985. Naturally, his work falls in the mid-point of the period under review. Besides taking into consideration the views and opinions advanced by his predecessors since the publication of Muir's work, Margoliouth reflected the state of the orientalists' thinking about the Prophet at the beginning of the twentieth century. He also advanced some new conclusions and opinions of his own that were adopted and re-stated by his successors, including Watt.

W. Montgomery Watt is acknowledgedly a leading European authority on Islam and the Prophet at the present time. *His Muhammad at Mecca* was first published in 1953, followed quickly by his second work, *Muhammad at Medina*, which was published in 1956. These two works have since been republished a number of times. They have also been translated in a number of European languages and also in Arabic. He has also other works relating to the subject. As already mentioned, his latest work on the Prophet, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, was published in 1988.

It is thus obvious that an analysis and evaluation of the works of these scholars would give us an idea of the state of the orientalists' approach to the *Sîrah* in the middle of the nineteenth century, at the beginning of the twenti-

1. See for details M.M.Ali, *History of the Muslims of Bengal*, Vol.II, Imam Muḥammad ibn Saud Islamic University, Riyadh, 1988, pp. 227-233. Raḥmat Allah subsequently wrote his famous work, *Iẓhâr al-Ḥaqq*, on the basis of that debate.

eth century and during its later part, as well as of the evolution of their ideas and opinions since the mid-nineteenth century till the present time.

The present volume is devoted to the Makkan period of the Prophet's life. It will be observed from the table of contents that I have divided this period into seven sections according to the main events and developments. At the beginning of each section I have described in one or more chapters these events and developments. These chapters are not intended to be an exhaustive account of the *Sîrah*. They are designed mainly to enable the general reader the better to understand the discussions that follow on the views and opinions of the orientalists concerning those topics. In discussing their views I have attempted to summarize their arguments and reasons as faithfully as possible and to meet them on their own grounds.

* * *

I am grateful to the authorities of the King Fahd Qur'ân Printing Complex, particularly to its Supervisor-General, His Excellency Dr. 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkî, and its Secretary-General, Dr. Muḥammad Sâlim ibn Shudayyid al-'Awfî, for having undertaken the publication of this work. I am also grateful to the authorities of the Islamic University, Madina Munawwara, particularly its President, Dr. 'Abd Allah ibn Ṣâliḥ al-'Ubayd, for having sponsored the project of the present work. My thanks are due also to the Director of the Centre for the Service of *Sunnah* and *Sîrah*, Dr. Marzûq ibn Hayyâs al-Zahrânî, for his constant help and encouragement in accomplishing the project. I am thankful also to all my colleagues at the Centre, specially to my two colleagues in its *Sîrah* department, Shaykh Ṣafîy al-Raḥmân Mubârakpûrî and Shaykh Aḥmad 'Abd Allah Bâjûr, for their help in checking up references; and and to Dr. V. 'Abd al-Raḥîm of the Faculty of Arabic Language, for encouragement and help in various ways. My thanks are due also to Ma'rûf and Manṣûr for help in preparing the final script of the work and in checking the proofs; and to my wife, Razia, for constant encouragement and help in all possible ways.

In preparing this work I had to work in the Central Library of the Islamic University, Madina, the Library of its Higher Studies Department, the Library of the Centre for the Service of *Sunnah* and *Sîrah*, the Library of the Prophet's Mosque, the Library of the Oriental Section of the Faculty of Da'wah of the Imam Muḥammad Islamic University, situated at Madina Munawwara, the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, Lon-

don and the British Library (British Museum). Everywhere I received the best of attention and the most willing cooperation. My thanks are due to the staff of all these libraries and institutions.

The Prophet's Mosque, M. M. Ali
19 Dhu al-Qa'dah, 1413 H.
(10 May 1993)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Al-Azraqî	'Abû al-Walîd Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Aḥmad al-Azraqî, *Akhbâr Makka wa mâ jâ'a fîhâ min al-'Âthâr*, ed. Rushdî al-Ṣâliḥ Mulḥis, Beirut, 1399 / 1979.
Al-Fâsî	'Abû Ṭayyib Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad, al-Taqî, al-Fâsî, *Al-'Iqd al-Thamîn Fî Târîkh al-Balad al-'Amîn,* 8 Vols., Cairo, 1379-1388 H.
B.S.O.A.S.	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, London.
Bukhârî	'Abu 'Abd Allâh Muḥammad ibn Ismâ'îl al-Bukhârî, *Ṣaḥîḥ al-Bukhârî* (The number refers to the number of *ḥadîth* in *Fatḥ al-Bârî*).
Ibn Hishâm	'Abû Muḥammad 'Abd al-Malik ibn Hishâm, *al-Sîrah al-Nabawiyyah* ed. Muḥammad al-Saqqâ and others, 2 Vols., second print, Cairo, 1375 / 1955.
Ibn Sa'd	Muḥammad ibn Sa'd ibn Manî', 'Abû 'Abd Allâh, *Al-Ṭabaqât al-Kubrâ*, 8 Vols., Beirut, 1405 / 1985.
J.R.A.S.	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, London.
M.W.	*The Moslem World*, Hartford Seminary Foundation, Connecticut, U.S.A.
Muslim	'Abû al-Ḥasan Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjâj, al-Qushayrî, al-Naysabûrî, *Ṣaḥîḥ Muslim*, (The number refers to the number of *ḥadîth* in the edition by Fu'âd A. Bâqî, 5 Vols., Istanbul, n.d.)
Musnad	'Abû 'Abd Allâh Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal ibn Muḥammad, *Musnad al-Imâm Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal wa bihâmishihi Muntakhab Kanz al-'Ummâl*, 6 Vols, old print, n.d.
Suhaylî	'Abû al-Qâsim 'Abd al-Raḥmân ibn 'Abd Allâh ibn 'Abî al-Ḥasan al-Khath'amî, *Al-Rawḍ al-'Unuf Fî Tafsîr al-Sîrah al-Nabawiyyah li ibn Hishâm,* ed. Ṭa-Hâ 'Abd al-Ra'ûf Sa'îd, 4 vols, Beirut, 1398.

T.G.U.O.S	*Transactions of the Glasgow University Oriental Society*, Glasgow.
Ṭayâlisî	Sulaymân ibn Dâud ibn al-Jârûd 'Abî Dâud, *Musnad 'Abî Dâud al-Ṭayâlisî*, Beirut, n.d.
Tirmidhî	'Abû 'Îsâ Muḥammad ibn 'Isâ ibn Sawrah, *Al-Jâmi' al-Ṣaḥîḥ wa huwa Sunan al-Tirmidhî*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shâkir, 4 vols., Cairo, second print, 1398 / 1987.
Watt, *M. at M.*	W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1988.
Watt, *M.'s M.*	W. Montgomery Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, Edinburgh, 1988.

SECTION I
THE SOURCES AND THE BACKGROUND

CHAPTER I

THE SOURCES OF THE *SÎRAH*

In the main there are three sources of information on the life and activities of Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ). These are the Qur'ân, the *Ḥadîth* (reports / traditions) and the early accounts called the *Sîrah / Maghâzî* literature. The *ḥadîth* compilations and the *sîrah / maghâzî* literature are very much similar in respect of the materials they contain. Basically they both are collections of "reports". Hence some scholars are inclined to classify the two in one and the same category of "reports" or "traditions".[1] There are however, two important distinctions between the two. The *ḥadîth* collections are arranged either according to doctrinal, juridical and legal topics or according to the original transmitters of the reports. The *sîrah* compilations, on the other hand, are arranged more or less chronologically and in accordance with the incidents and events of the Prophet's life. Secondly, in the *ḥadîth* compilations greater attention has been paid to the chains of narrators of each report and to other questions and rules bearing on the authenticity and trustworthiness of the reports. In the *sîrah* literature, on the other hand, the rules regarding *isnâd* have not always been observed, though often the same scholar was involved in both types of work. The *sîrah* literature, however, has one point of advantage in its favour. It alone provides the chronological framework of the Prophet's life-story and it contains information on some aspects of the Prophet's life that is not available in the *ḥadîth* literature properly so called. All the three sources are, however, supplementary and complementary to one another and all of them have to be taken into account in order to have a proper view of the life and activities of the Prophet.

I. THE QUR'ÂN

The Qur'ân is divine in origin. It was revealed to the Prophet in short and long passages over a period of 23 years through the angel Jibrîl.[2] As it was revealed the Prophet committed each and every passage to memory. The Qur'ân itself bears testimony to the fact that early in his career he at times became so eager to commit the revealed text to memory that he hurriedly

1. Thus A.J. Wensinck, for instance, includes the works of Ibn Hîsham, Al-Wâqidî and Ibn Sa'd in his well-known Index to *ḥadîth* literature.

2. See for a discussion on the nature of Qur'ânic revelation *infra,* Ch.XX, sec.III.

started repeating the words as the angel uttered them.[1] He was divinely asked not to do so and was assured that Allah would enable him to retain in his memory whatever was revealed to him. Many of his companions also memorized the sacred texts. They had the immediate need to do so because they had to recite the passages in the prayer which was made incumbent on them from the very beginning of Islam. In the course of time the Prophet as well as many of his ardent followers had the entire Qur'ân committed to memory. In Arabia in those days, as also in many other places in the world, it was the practice to memorize whole texts and literary works, genealogies and traditions, and to transmit them orally to subsequent generations; and the Arabs were specially gifted with the skill of memorization. At intervals, particularly in the month of Ramaḍân, the Prophet recited the whole Qur'ân, as far as it was revealed, to the angel Jibrîl; and it is on record that during the last Ramadân of his life he recited the entire Qur'ân twice before that angel.[2] It was also during his life-time that he arranged the passages of the Qur'ân into *sûrahs* and sections in their present form, according to divine guidance received through Jibrîl.

Not that the Qur'ân was committed only to memory. The Prophet took early care to have the passages of the Qur'ân written on suitable and available materials like tree-leaves, bark, hides, bones, stones and such other objects. Indeed the impetus to have the texts written down was given in the very first revelation which emphasized, among other things, the acquisition and preservation of knowledge by means of the pen.[3] Also, since the main justification for the new revelation was that the earlier revealed books had been corrupted and altered by their followers, it was only natural that the Prophet should have been doubly careful to take appropriate steps to guard against such an eventuality in the case of the new revelation. Indeed the Qur'ân itself points to this fact and declares its absolute integrity and immunity from external interference and interpolation-"it is indeed a Book of stupendous authority. No falsity can approach it from its front, nor from its rear (i.e., neither directly nor indirectly).[4] Thus the Qur'ân was preserved in memory as well as in writing.

1. Q. 75:16-18.
2. *Bukhârî,* nos., 1902, 4997, 4998.
3. Q. 96:4-5.
4. Q. 41:41-42. = ﴿ ... وإنه لكتـٰـب عزيز * لا يأتيه البـٰـطل من بين يديه ولا من خلفه ... ﴾

The process of writing down the texts started early enough, almost simultaneously with the beginning of the revelation. The Prophet employed a number of his followers as copyists of the Qur'ânic texts.[1] Written records of the revealed texts were kept with the Prophet as also with many of his followers. The story of Fâṭimah bint al-Khaṭṭâb's having concealed a written tablet of the Qur'ânic text at the approach of her enraged brother, 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb (r.a.) to her house and then of her having shown it to him when he calmed down is well-known to any student of Islamic history. This happened about the sixth year of the Prophet's mission. As the days rolled on such written records multiplied along with the accumulation of the revelations. After the Prophet's migration to Madina four of the *anṣâr* were particularly engaged in collecting the Qur'ân and keeping it with them.[2] The text of the entire Qur'ân written on various objects and kept in a container remained with the Prophet as well. Such written records of more or less the entire Qur'ân lay with a number of his followers also.

Almost immediately after the Prophet's death a number of Arab tribes made an attempt to renounce Islam and to secede from the authority of Madina. In the wars that followed — the *riddah* war — many *ḥuffâẓ* (memorizers of the entire Qur'ân) died. Hence the question of preserving the Qur'ân freshly attracted the attention of those in authority. At 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb's suggestion the first Khalîfah 'Abû Bakr (r.a.) took steps to have the written records of the Qur'ânic texts arranged in the order of the *sûrahs* and sections as taught by the Prophet and as learnt by the *ḥuffâẓ*. The task was entrusted to Zayd ibn Thâbit (r.a) who had been a scribe under the Prophet. He compared the written texts with the recitation of the *ḥuffâẓ* and thus prepared a master-copy of the Qur'ân. This was kept with 'Abû Bakr during his life-time, then with 'Umar and, after his death, with his daughter *'Umm al-Mu'minîn* Ḥafṣah (r.a.).[3] During the *Khilâfah* of 'Uthmân (r.a.), 24-35 H., a tendency towards variant readings of the Qur'ân was detected in the far-flung provinces. Hence he took immediate steps to make copies of the Qur'ân from the master-copy in Ḥafṣah's keeping and to send them to the various provinces, withdrawing and suppressing any variation in the reading

1. See M. Muṣṭafâ al-A'ẓamî, *Kuttâb al-Nabî Ṣallallâhu 'alayhi wa sallama*, Beirut, 1394.

2. *Bukhârî*, nos. 3810, 3996, 5003, 5004; *Muslim*, no. 2465; *Musnad*, III, 233, 277; *Ṭayâlisî*, No. 2018.

3. *Bukhârî*, Nos. 4986, 4989, 7191.

found to exist anywhere. His role was thus simply that of a publisher of the master-copy of the Qur'ân, not that of its "collector", far less that of a "compiler". Since then the same Qur'ân has been in circulation in writing as it has been also preserved and transmitted from generation to generation through memorization of its entire text. The practice of memorization continues still today in spite of the tremendous progress in the art of printing and in photo-mechanical and electronic reproduction and retrieval systems. Indeed the act of memorizing the Qur'ân and of "learning" it and teaching it has been assigned great religious merit by the Prophet so that even today Muslims can count among their ranks millions of *ḥuffâẓ* of the entire Qur'ân, whereas it is hard to find among the votaries of other religious systems even a single individual who can recite from memory even a single chapter from his sacred text. Also, since the Prophet's time it has been the continual practice of Muslims of all climes to complete the recitation of the whole Qur'ân through the month-long special nightly *tarâwîḥ* prayer during Ramaḍân. No other people on earth have shown so much avidity and taken so meticulous a care to preserve the purity of their sacred texts as the Muslims have done.

The Qur'ân is thus the most authentic and absolutely contemporary record relating to the Prophet. Anyone desiring to understand the *sîrah* must constantly refer to it.[1] It must not be supposed, however, that it is a book of history, far less an autobiography. Indeed it is unique in nature and is unlike any other book in respect of diction, style of expression, arrangement of its chapters and sections and the manner of its treatment of the topics and themes it deals with. Its most appropriate description is that which it gives to itself, namely, "guidance for the God-fearing".[2] Nevertheless it contains information on the life and activities of the Prophet in many ways. In the first place, it represents the corpus of the teachings and messages he delivered to mankind, the reforms and reconstruction in man's belief, thought, life and conduct made under Allah's instructions. In other words, it is the best reflex of his role as Prophet and Messenger of Allah. Secondly, it contains very clear references to specific events and incidents of his life, both pulic and private, to the manners of his receipt of Allah's revelations, his role as preacher, warner and conveyer of good tidings for the believers in

1. See on this point Shaykh Muḥammad 'Alî al-Ḥarkân, *Al-Sîrah al-Nabawiyyah fi al-Qur'ân al-Karîm*, in *Al-Buḥûth wa al-Dirâsât al-muqaddamah li al-Mu'tamar al-'Alamî al-Thâlith li al-Sîrah al-Nabawiyyah*, Ḍoha, Muḥarram, 1404 H., Pt. III, pp. 7-130.

2. Q. 2:2. ﴿هدى للمتقين﴾

this world and in the hereafter, to the opposition of the unbelievers, the objections they raised, the absurd demands they made of the Prophet, the replies that were given to their objections and demands, the persecution they inflicted on the believers, the conspiracies they hatched against the Prophet, the attempts they made to kill him, the straitened situation which led the Muslims and the Prophet to migrate from Makka, the wars they had to fight against the unbelievers like those at Badr, 'Uḥud and Khandaq, the divine help through all these struggles and wars, the treaty made with the Makkans and their ultimate surrender to the Prophet and to the completion of the task given him by allah. Not only these. There are references also to his personal life prior to his call to Prophethood, to his orphanhood, his earlier poverty and subsequent affluence, his relationship with his wives, the calumny directed against one of his wives and even to his temporary inattention to an humble enquirer. In short, there is no aspect of the Prophet's life and mission which is not alluded to in the Qur'ân excepting the mention of the specific dates of the events and incidents. In fact, each passage or part of the passage of the Qur'ân was revealed on specific occasions and incidents of his life. Thirdly, the Qur'ân also alludes to past peoples and civilizations, to the previous Prophets and their struggles, the attitudes of the former unbelieving peoples and their fates, to past events like Abrahah's invasion of Makka for the purpose of destroying the Ka'ba and its fate, to contemporary events like the war between the Roman and the Persian empires and to the prevailing beliefs, customs and superstitions of the Arab people. All these provide the necessary background information on the Prophet's life and mission.

A remarkable distinction of the Qur'ân as a historical record is that unlike other records of a contemporary or near-contemporary nature, and unlike autobiographies, it was not withheld from public view for any length of time for reasons of "policy", "state secrets" and "national" or "personal" interests. On the contrary, it was meant for immediate publication and communication to the people, and was in fact so published and communicated. This fact is very important in two main respects. In the first place, it militates against the suggestion made by the critics of Islam and of the Prophet that he "revised", modified or "altered" the text of the Qur'ân with the progress of his mission and as he advanced in knowledge and experience. For, if he did modify or alter the texts from time to time or in any noticeable manner, even his followers, not to speak of his opponents, would have found fault with him and would almost certainly have deserted him. Secondly, if the Qur'ân stated

anything running counter to the known facts of his life and character, his credit would have been irretrievably compromised and his mission would have ended in failure, as his enemies, the unbelieving Quraysh leaders, were ever ready to discredit him in all possible ways. Hence, when the Qur'ân states, for instance, that prior to his receipt of the revelation he did not entertain any aspiration nor made any preparation for playing the part of a Prophet, or that he did not read any book and was an "unlettered" person, that information is to be accepted as absolutely correct. For, otherwise he would have been instantly contradicted and held up to ridicule and discredit by his own people who knew him intimately since his boyhood. Hence, besides the divine origin of the Qur'ân, this absolute contemporaneity itself invests it with a peculiar authenticity. Therefore any information and glimpses of the Prophet's life and activities contained in the Qur'ân must have an unquestioned precedence over all the other sources of information.

The Qur'ân, however, does not elaborate any event, nor does it give the details of the Prophet's life and activities. For these as also for the chronology we have to turn to *hadîth*, also termed *sunnah*.

II. *ḤÂDÎTH*

The term *ḥadîth* is applied to the reports of the Prophet's sayings and doings, his practices and his explicit or implicit approval of the words or deeds of anyone else. It applies also to the reports of the statements, acts and approvals of his Companions and their immediate successors. As such these reports are of prime historical importance, being the statements and accounts given by eye-witnesses and participants in the events. Often these reports are so vivid and detailed that there should be no question as to their authenticity. When, for instance, Waḥshî gives his own account of how he killed Ḥamzah ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib (r.a.) in the battle of 'Uḥud and how, as an atonement for that deed he, after his embracing of Islam, killed Musaylamah al-Kadhdhâb in the battle of Yamâmah,[1] or when Surâqah ibn Mâlik ibn Ju'shum gives his own account of how, being lured by the Quraysh's declaration of a prize of one hundred camels on the head of the Prophet, he went in pursuit of the latter, being well equipped with his lance and arrows and riding on his swift horse, and how he was miraculously incapacitated to doing any harm to the Prophet and was thus obliged to come back unsuc-

1. *Bukhârî*, no. 4072.

cessful in his purpose,[1] there is no reason to doubt those accounts.

The Qur'ân clearly asks the Prophet to explain and elucidate its meaning and teachings to the people;[2] and he did so throughout his Prophetic life. In this task also he depended on divine guidance and instructions and did not speak anything out of his whim or imagination. His followers noted his utterances with all attention and remembered them carefully. Many of them were in the habit of writing down his statements and utterances,[3] so much so that once he had to interfere and ask them not to write down all his statements and utterances lest those should be mixed up with the texts of the Qur'ân.[4] Incidentally, this very report shows, besides the Companions' practice of writing down the Prophet's statements, that not only was each passage of the Qur'ân written down as soon as it was revealed, but also that the Prophet took care to see that nothing extraneous was mingled up with the sacred text, not even his own explanations.

After the Prophet's death his Companions and followers became all the more careful to remember and act upon his statements and directives. Many of them kept written notes of such statements and utterances of the Prophet. At any rate, since the middle of the first century H. we have specific references to the systematic collection and writing down of *ḥadîth* by a number of Companions and *Tâbi'ûn* (the generation immediately succeeding the Companions).[5] Thus we know for certain that 'Abân ibn 'Uthmân ibn 'Affân (born between 15 and 20 H.) collected and trasmitted some reports relating to *Maghâzî* and taught *fiqh* and adjudication based on *ḥadîth* to a number of persons including 'Abû Bakr ibn Ḥazm.[6] During the same period a junior contemporary of 'Abân ibn 'Uthmân, namely, 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr (born 26 H.), gained fame as a *muḥaddith* and *faqîh*. "His relationship alone",[7] as J. Horovitz points out, "placed him in the position to obtain

1. *Ibid.*, no. 3906.
2. Q. 16:44. = ﴿ ... وأنزلنا إليك الذكر لتبيّن للناس ما نُزّل إليهم ولعلهم يتفكرون ﴾
3. See for instance *Bukhârî*, no. 111-113; *Musnad*, II, 192, 207, 215, 403.
4. *Muslim*, No. 3004.
5. See for details M.M. A'ẓamî, *Studies in Early Ḥadîth Literature*, Indianapolis, 1978 and Muhammad Zubayr Siddiqi, *Hadith Literature: Its Origin, Development, Special Features and Criticism*, Calcutta University, 1961. (revised edition published by the Islamic texts society, Combridge, 1993.
6. Ibn Sa'd, V, 151; Al-Dhahabî, *Siyar*, IV, 351-53.
7. 'Urwah's mother 'Asmâ' was 'Â'ishah's elder sister.

numerous accounts concerning the early days of Islam at first hand; from his father, from his mother, and above all from his aunt, 'Âisha whom he was never tired of visiting and questioning."[1] A large number of reports of 'Urwah have indeed come down to us, especially through his son Hishâm and Ibn Shihâb al-Zuhrî.

There were also others at that time who devoted themselves to the collection and preservation of *ḥadîth*. Particular mention may be made of 'Abû Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Amr ibn Ḥazm. His grandfather, 'Amr ibn Ḥazm, was appointed governor of Najran by the Prophet and was instructed by him to teach Islam to the people of that region. As indicated above, 'Abû Bakr received his knowledghe of jurisprudence from 'Abân ibn 'Uthmân and, by 86 H., became the Qâḍî of Madina when 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azîz was its governor. 'Abû Bakr continued in that post for long and was made governor of Madina in addition to its judgeship in 96 H. Besides being himself a great *muḥaddith*, he trained and encouraged his son 'Abd Allah to specialize in collecting and preserving *ḥadîth*.

Thus by the last quarter of the first century H. the collection, preservation and study of *ḥadîth* had been well under way. So far, however, the work was done mostly on the initiative of individual scholars and experts. Even then, the scale of individual efforts in the matter was indeed very wide. It is reported about Ibn Shihâb al-Zuhrî (51-124 H.) that he made a huge number of compilations of *ḥadîth* and these were kept in the state store. On the death of Khalîfah Al-Walîd in 96 H. these were carried away from there on the back of a number of animals.[2]

The first systematic state initiative in the work was taken when 'Umar ibn 'Abd 'Azîz became the *Khalîfah* (99-101). His own learning and interest in the subject, coupled with his experience as governor of Madina and his consequent contact with the *muḥaddithûn* of that city, particularly with its well-known judge (and subsequently governor) 'Abû Bakr ibn Muḥammad, had doubtless a good deal to do with his resolution in this respect. It was this 'Abû Bakr ibn Muḥammad, along with Muḥammad ibn Muslim ibn 'Ubayd Allah ibn Shihâb al-Zuhrî and two other scholars whom he commissioned to make a systematic collection and compilation of *ḥadîth*.[3] These scholars dili-

1. J. Horovitz, in *Islamic Culture*, I, 1927, p. 547.
2. Ibn Sa'd, II, 389.
3. See Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-Bârî*, I, 160.

gently carried out their task and by the beginning of the second century H. a considerable collection of *ḥadîth* came into existence.

Basing upon such primary collections and making further investigation and painstaking search the subsequent generations of *muḥaddithûn* compiled a huge corpus of *ḥadîth* during the succeeding centuries. Of such collections the most important are the following:

1. The *Muwaṭṭa* of Mâlik ibn Anas (93-179 H.)
2. The *Musnad* of Sulaymân ibn Dâud ibn al-Jârûd 'Abû Dâud al-Ṭayâlisî (133-204 H.)
3. The *Musnad* of 'Abû 'Abd Allah Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥanbal (164-241 H.)
4. The *Sunan* of 'Abû Muḥammad 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmân al-Dârimî (181-255 H.)
5. The *Ṣaḥîḥ* of 'Abû 'Abd Allah Muḥammad ibn Ismâ'îl al-Bukhârî (194-256 H.)
6. The *Sunan* of 'Abû Dâud Sulaymân ibn al-Ash'ath al-Azdî al-Sijistânî (202-275 H.)
7. The *Ṣaḥîḥ* of 'Abû al-Ḥusayn Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjâj al-Qushayrî al-Naysâbûrî (206-261 H.)
8. The *Sunan* of 'Abû 'Abd al-Raḥmân Aḥmad ibn Shu'ayb ibn 'Alî ibn Baḥr al-Nasâ'î (214-303 H.)
9. The *Ṣaḥîḥ* of 'Abû Bakr Muḥammad ibn Isḥâq ibn Khuzaymah, al-Sulamî, al-Naysâbûrî (223-311)
10. The *Sunan* of 'Abû al-Ḥasan 'Alî ibn 'Umar ibn Aḥmad al-Dâraquṭnî (306-385 H.)
11. The *Mustadrak* etc. of Al-Hâkim 'Abd Allah Muḥmmad ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Muḥammad al-Naysâbûrî (321-405 H.); and
12. The *Sunan* of 'Abû Bakr Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alî ibn 'Abd Allah al-Bayḥaqî (384-458 H.)

As the work of collection and compilation of *ḥadîth* continued over centuries, quite a mumber of fabricated and forged reports and modified versions of original reports came into being, due mainly to the desire to further personal, party, group and sectarian interests. A good deal of forged reports got into circulation due also to subversive motives on the part of

insincere converts from heterogeneous backgrounds. Many such false and fabricated reports as also Judaeo-Christian traditions found their way into most of the commentaries of the Qur'ân and the chronicles written during those centuries. Fortunately, however, the *muḥaddithûn* and scholars were aware of this fact and they took special care to subject the reports and narrations to rigorous scrutiny and tests, selecting and incorporating in their compilations only those that passed the various types of tests. In fact, before long, an independent branch of academic discipline, the principles or science of *ḥadîth* (*'uṣûl al-ḥadîth*) came into existence. Broadly, the process of scrutiny and investigation took two distinct lines — (a) a thorough investigation into the character, personality, capacity and background of each and every transmitter of a particular report,[1] and (b) textual criticism with special reference to internal evidence, compatibility or otherwise with the Qur'ân and well-established facts and, in general, with the rules of rational criticism.[2] As thus scrutinized and sifted, the main collections are generally authentic and trustworthy. For details of the life and activities of the Prophet we have to depend on this vast *ḥadîth* literature.

III. THE EARLY *SÎRAH/MAGHÂZÎ* LITERATURE

The third source of information on the life and activities of the Prophet is the works of some early chroniclers.[3] As indicated earlier these also consist of reports or traditions, but are arranged more or less in chronological orders. The earliest of such works also may be traced to the middle of the first century H. when the learned élite of Madina had turned their attention to the task of collecting and preserving *ḥadîth*. Indeed, both types of activities were two aspects of the same urge to obtain and preserve information about the deeds and words of the Prophet. Hence, in the early stages, more or less the same scholars were both collectors of *ḥadîth* as well as compilers of *maghâzî* literature. It may be noted here that at the early stages the term m*aghâzî* was

1. This line of investigation led to the emergence of an extensive biographical literature (*Ṭabaqât* and books on *Rijâl*).

2. See for instance Al-Ḥâkim 'Abû 'Abd Allah Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allah al-Naysâbûrî, *Al-Madkhal 'ilâ Ma'rifat al-Iklâl*, (ed. J. Robson), London, 1953. Also Al-Ḥâkim's *Kitâb Ma'rifat 'Ulûm al-Ḥadîth* (ed. Sayyid Mu'aẓẓam Ḥusayn), second impression, Madina, 1397 / 1977.

3. See for a detailed account J. Horovitz, "The Earliest biographies of the Prophet and their authors" (tr. from German by Marmaduke Pickthall), in *Islamic Culture*, I, 1927, pp. 535-559; II, 1928, pp. 22-50, 164-182 and 495-523.

used rather loosely to denote both the *sîrah* proper as well as the campaigns. The distinction between the two terms came to be made at a subsequent stage.

The first scholar who is known to have concerned himself with *maghâzî* in its wider sense was the same 'Abân ibn 'Uthmân (b.15-20 H.) to whom reference has already been made. He was *Khalîfah* 'Abd al-Malik's governor of Madina from 75 to 83 H. It appears that he made a collection of materials relating to the *sîrah* but nothing except a few isolated reports from him survive. Similarly his junior contemporary and a prominent member of the learned community of Madina, 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwâm (26-94 H.), also devoted himself to the subject. He not only collected and transmitted a large number of reports but also gathered information about a number of specific events of the Prophet's life. In reply to queries made by *Khalîfahs* 'Abd al-Malik and Al-Walîd, 'Urwah submitted a number of written statements. These are quoted by Ibn Isḥâq, Al-Wâqidî, Ibn Sa'd and Al-Ṭabarî. In these written communications 'Urwah does not generally mention his sources, though while reporting a *ḥadîth* he usually refers to 'Umm al-Mu'minîn 'Â'ishah as his source.[1]

There were at least two others from among the *Tâbi'ûn* who dealt with *maghâzî*. They were Shurahbîl ibn Sa'd (d.123 H.) and Wahb ibn Munabbih (34-110 H.). The former reported *ḥadîth* from Zayd ibn Thâbit,'Abû Hurayrah and 'Abû Sa'îd al-Khudrî (r.a.). Shuraḥbîl is said to have written down lists of emigrants to Madina and of those who took part in the battles of Badr and 'Uḥud. He is, however, regarded as an untrustworthy authority. Neither Ibn Isḥâq nor Al-Wâqidî cites him, but Ibn Sa'd reproduces his report concerning the Prophet's journey from Qubâ' to Madina.[2] The other scholar, Wahb ibn Munabbih, was a "South Arabian of Persian origin" and took special interest in Jewish and Christian traditions. He is said to have compiled, among other works, a *Kitâb al-Mubtada'* and a *Kitâb al-Maghâzî*.[3] He is quoted by Ibn Isḥâq, Al-Ṭabarî, Mas'ûdî, Ibn Qutaybah and others. Nowhere, however, Wahb mentions the sources of his information.

1. Recently the available fragments of 'Urwah's writings have been collected by M.M. A'ẓamî and published under the title: *Maghâzî Rasûlullah Ṣallallahu 'alayhi wa Sallama*, Riyadh, 1401.

2. Ibn Sa'd, I, 237.

3. A fragment of the latter work was discovered by C.H. Becker which is preserved in Heidelberg. See *Islamic Culture*, I, p. 558

Coming to the succeeding generation, *Tâbi'û-Tabi'în*, there were at least three scholars who deserve special mention. They are: 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abû Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Amr ibn Ḥazm (d.130/135 H.), 'Âṣim ibn 'Umar ibn Qatâdah (d.120 H.) and Muḥammad ibn 'Ubayd Allah ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Shihâb al-Zuhrî (51-124 H.).

Reference has already been made to the ancestors of 'Abd Allah, particularly to his father 'Abû Bakr ibn Muḥammad. 'Abd Allah's family background enabled him to make a considerable collection of materials relating to *maghâzî* in its wider sense. Ibn Isḥâq, Al-Wâqidî Ibn Sa'd and Al-Ṭabarî all cite him as their authority and quote him frequently. According to Horovitz, the *Kitâb al-Maghâzî* referred to in the *Fihrist* as a compilation of 'Abd Allah's nephew 'Abd al-Mâlik, but of which no trace has been found, "probably consisted of the collected material which he had acquired from his uncle".[1] A notable aspect of 'Abd Allah's work was that he attempted to establish the chronological order of the Prophet's campaigns which Ibn Isḥâq adopts.[2] 'Abd Allah also transmits the Prophet's communications to various Arabian princes and deals with the Arab tribes' delegations to the Prophet.[3] He does not, however, mention his authorities with regard to many of his reports. At times he also incorporates his own views in the reports he transmits.

'Âṣim ibn 'Umar ibn Qatâdah ibn al-Nu'mân also belonged to a noble Madinan family. His grandfather Qatâdah (r.a.) was a close companion of the Prophet. 'Âsim was renowned for his knowledge of the *sîrah* and *maghâzî*.[4] *Khalîfah* 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azîz assigned him a chair at the mosque at Damascus to narrate to the people the Prophet's campaigns and the noble deeds of his Companions.[5] He is one of the chief authorities of Ibn Isḥâq and Al-Wâqidî for the *maghâzî* properly so called. Like 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abû Bakr, 'Âṣim too frequently does not mention his authorities and also mingles his opinions with the reports he transmits.

Muḥammad ibn Muslim ibn 'Ubayd Allah ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Shihâb al-

1. *Ibid.*, II, 1928, p. 26, citing *Fihrist*, 226.
2. Al-Ṭabarî, *Târîkh*, III, 152-153 (I / 1756).
3. *Ibid.*, 120-121 (I / 1717-1718).
4. Ibn Qutaybah, *Al-Ma'ârif*, 466; Al-Dhahabî, *Siyar*, V, 240.
5. Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhîb*, V, 54.

Zuhrî belonged to the Banû Zuhrah of Makka.[1] He received his knowledge, among others, form 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr and ultimately became the most learned of the Madinan society of his time. He was equally well-versed in *ḥadîth*, genealogy and *maghâzî*. He had a remarkable memory. Nonetheless, like many others of his time, he used to write down the reports he collected and he passed these on to the succeeding generation. He collected and recorded a large number of *ḥadîth* and, as indicated earlier, received a commission from *Khalîfah* 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azîz to make a compilation of it. Among his other works we find mention of a *Maghâzî*; but it survives only in the from of quotations in the works of others.[2] From these quotations, especially those in Ibn Sa'd, it appears that Al-Zuhrî dealt not only with the *maghâzî* proper but also with the other events of the Prophet's life. He appears also to have distinguished between the terms *sîrah* and *maghâzî*. Al-Zuhrî generally gives *isnâd* with his reports, but sometimes it is lacking.

During his long and distinguished academic life Al-Zuhrî became teacher to a large number of pupils. Of them three came to prominence as writers of *sîrah/maghâzî*. They were Mûsâ ibn 'Uqbah (55-141 H.), Ma'mar ibn Râshid (96-154 H.) and Muḥammad ibn Isḥâq (85-150/151 H.)

Mûsâ ibn 'Uqbah acquired knowledge at the Prophet's mosque, principally under the tutelage of Al-Zuhrî. He is reckoned as a trustworthy and reliable authority. He compiled a book on *maghâzî* which has come down to us in fragments and quotations. From these extracts it is clear that his main authority was Al-Zuhrî. Al-Wâqidî, Ibn Sa'd and Al-Ṭabarî reproduce reports from him on a number of topics.

Ma'mar ibn Râshid was born at Baṣra but settled in Yaman. He was well-known as a *muḥaddith* and also compiled a *Kitâb al-Maghâzî*. Like the works of his predecessors it also survives only in quotations and extracts in subsequent works like those of Al-Wâqidî, Ibn Sa'd, Al-Ṭabarî and Balâdhurî. Most of his statements go back to Al-Zuhrî. He paid a good deal of attention to Biblical history and, to some extent, to the life of the Prophet before migration. He is one of the main sources of Al-Wâqidî.

1. Al-Zuhrî's ancestry met with that of the Prophet in the person of Kilâb ibn Murrah. The Prophet's mother 'Âminah and the famous Companion Sa'd ibn 'Abî Waqqâṣ (r.a.) belonged to the Zuhrah clan. Zuhrah was brother of Quṣayy ibn Kilâb who settled the Quraysh at Makka.

2. Recently the fragments of Al-Zhurî's reports on *maghâzî* have been collected and edited by Dr. Suhayl Zakkâr under the title *Maghâzî al-Nabawiyyah*, Damascus, 1401 / 1981.

Of all the students of Al-Zuhrî, Muḥammad ibn Isḥâq ibn Yasâr is best known if only because his work, the *Kitâb al-Maghâzî*, has come down to us more or less in its complete from through the edition of ibn Hishâm (d.218 H.). Muḥammad's grandfather, Yasâr, was a Christian Arab, while his father Isḥâq was a zealous collector of *ḥadîth*. Ibn Isḥâq received his knowledge, besides Al-Zuhrî, from 'Âṣim ibn 'Umar ibn Qatâdah and 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abû Bakr, and supplemented it by other accounts obtained in Egypt and Iraq. He wrote his work for *Khalîfah* 'Abû Ja'far al-Manṣûr (r.136-158 H.), though not on an official commission from him.[1] The edition of Ibn Hishâm, which is best known as *Al-Sîrat al-Nabawiyyah*, was based on a copy of the work which he received from Ibn Isḥâq's immediate student, Al-Bukkâ'î (d.183 H.). Ibn Hishâm mentions, however, the alterations or omissions he made for the sake of reducing the volume of the work. He did not make any substantial change in the text. One notable omission made by him, for fear of "some people", was the report of the presence of 'Abbâs (r.a) in the battle of Badr on the Makkan side and his capture as a prisoner of war, a report which is preserved in Al-Ṭabarî. In fact, much of what is left out by Ibn Hishâm is preserved in the works of Al-Ṭabarî, Al-Azraqî and others.[2]

Though a generally acceptable account, the value of Ibn Isḥâq's work is somewhat compromised by the fact that some of his notable contemporaries like Mâlik ibn 'Anas and Hishâm ibn 'Urwah questioned his credibility.[3] Ibn Isḥâq himself acknowledges that he received information from the Jews, Christians and Persians and incorporated their traditions and accounts in his work. Often he expresses his doubts about the information he gives by interjecting the expression: *fî mâ yaz'umûna* ("as they think").

Of the younger contemporaries of Ibn Isḥâq mention may be made of 'Abû Ma'shar (Najîḥ ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmân al-Sindî, d. 170 H.) who wrote a *Kitâb al-Maghâzî*,[4] but it has come down to us only in fragments quoted

1. Ibn Qutaybah, *Al-Ma'ârif*, p. 492 See for a detailed study on Ibn Isḥâq, J. Fück, *Muḥammad ibn Isḥaq*, Frunkfurt-am-Main, 1925.

2. A Guillaume, in his *Life of Muḥammad: A Translation of Ibn Isḥâq's Sîrat Rasûl Allah*, (London, 1955), has attempted to compile Ibn Isḥâq's work from different sources including that of Ibn Hishâm but excluding his additions and explanations. Recently Dr. Suhayl Zakkâr has edited a version of Ibn Isḥâq's work, as reported by Yûnus ibn Bukayr, under caption *Kitâb al-Siayr wa al-Maghâzî* of Ibn Isḥâq, Damascus, 1398 / 1978.

3. Ibn Qutaybah *Al-Ma'ârif*, 492; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhîb*, IX, 42-43.

4. Al-Dhahabî, *Siyar*, VII, 435-436; XII, 609.

chiefly in the works of Al-Wâqidî and ibn Sa'd. Early Muslim scholars had, however, a very unfavourable opinion about 'Abû Ma'shar.[1] Another younger contemporary of Ibn Isḥâq was Yaḥyâ ibn Sa'îd al-'Umawî (111/119-194) who also compiled a *Kitâb al-Maghâzî*[2] but it survives in quotations only. The latter's contemporary and also a younger contemporary of Ibn Isḥâq,'Abd Allah ibn Wahb (125-197 H.) wrote another *Kitâb al-Maghâzî*.[3] A yet another younger contemporary of Ibn Isḥâq, and very much contemporary with the two last mentioned scholars, was the famous author 'Abd al-Razzâq ibn Hammâm (126-211 H.) He also wrote a *Kitâb al-Maghazî*.[4] It is reproduced in his *Al-Muṣannaf*.[5] It is clear that the process of writing the account of the Prophet's life was well under way by Ibn Isḥâq's time.

Of these early scholars whose works have survived more or less in their complete forms the most notable is Muḥammad ibn 'Umar Al-Wâqidî (130-207 H.) He flourished during the time of *Khalîfahs* Hârûn al-Rashîd and Al-Ma'mûn, receiving special favours from the celebrated minister Yaḥyâ ibn Khâlid al-Barmakî. Al-Wâqidî was a versatile writer and compiled a number of works. Of them only the *Kitâb al-Magâhzî* has come down to us.[6] Al-Wâqidî mentions the authorities on whom he based his account, including Al-Zuhrî, Ma'mar and 'Abû Ma'shar and occasionally Mûsâ ibn 'Uqbah, but not Ibn Isḥâq at all, though, as Horovitz points out, it "cannot be doubted that Waqidi made use of Ibn Isḥâq's work."[7] Al-Wâqidî mentions, however, that he received reports from others besides those mentioned by him. He concentrates his attention on the Madina period of the Prophet's life. Muslim scholarly opinion about him is very unfavourable. He is almost unanimously repudiated as an unsound and untrustworthy authority and as having

1. Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhîb,* X, 420-422; Al-Dhahabî, *Siyar*, VII, 437.
2. Al-Dhahabî, *Siyar*, I, 344: IX, 139; XX, 195; XXIII, 88.
3. *Ibid.*, IX, 225.
4. *Ibid*, XIX, 306; XXII, 357.
5. *Al-Muṣannaf*, V, 313-492.
6. The first third of the work was edited and published by Von Kremer in the Bibliotheca Indica Series under caption: *Waqîdî's History of Muḥammad's Campaigns*, Calcutta, 1850. An abridged German version was published by Julius Wellhausen under title: *Muḥammad in Madinah* (Berlin, 1882). Recently the complete work has been edited in three volumes by Marsden Jones.
7. *Islamic Culture*, II, 518.

tampered with or fabricated *ḥadîth* for his purpose.[1] His secretary Ibn Sa'd, however, considers him a good authority on *sîrah* and *maghâzî.*

Though initially a secretary and writer for Al-Wâqidî, Muḥammad Ibn Sa'd (168-230 H) in fact produced an independent and more valuable work in his *Al-Ṭabaqât al-Kubrâ*. The first two volumes of this encyclopaedic work are devoted to the life and activities of the Prophet; while the rest is a biographical dictionary of the Companions and the generation following them. Though based on Al-Wâqidî's work, Ibn Sa'd provides greater details, furnishes fuller *isnâd* and, in general, produces more complete reports. He also pays special attention to the personal characteristics of the Prophet, produces a number of original documents and arranges his materials more systematically. His *Ṭabqât* proper, or the life of the Companions and the *Tâbi'ûn* is very valuable as it provides rare information about the various aspects of the *sîrah*.[2] Muslim scholarly opinions are in favour of Ibn Sa'd and he is generally regarded as a sound and trustworthy narrator.

Closely following Ibn Sa'd, but not so comprehensive in his treatment of the subject, was Ibn 'Abî al-Dunyâ ('Abd Allah ibn Muḥammad ibn Sufyân, b. 208) who compiled a *Kitâb al-Maghâzî*.[3] It has not, however, reached us intact. He is outshined by his junior contemporary, the celebrated scholar Muḥammad ibn Jarîr al-Ṭabarî (224-320). His *Târikh al-Rusul wa al-Mulûk* (or *Târikh al-Umam wa al-Mulûk*) is an encyclopaedic work of which the second and third volumes[4] contain an account of the life and activities of the Prophet. Much of it is, however, based on Ibn Isḥâq's work. He is also the author of the comprehensive commentary of the Qur'ân, *Jâmi' al-Bayân 'an Ta'wîl 'Ây al-Qur'ân*. It is unique in that it is the first comprehensive commentary based on reports (*'âthâr*) which has come down to us.

With Al-Ṭabarî the early classical phase of the writings on *sîrah/maghâzî* may be said to have ended. The tradition of writing on the subject was of course continued and many other compilations came into existence in the succeeding centuries.[5] Simultaneously, works on the personality and noble

1. Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhîb*, IX, 363-368; Al-Dhahabî, *Mîzân*, II, 425-426.

2. Edited by E. Sachu and others, Leiden, 1924-28. A good reprint is that of Dâr Ṣâdir, Beirut, 1405 / 1985, in 9 volumes.

3. Al-Dhahabi *Siyar 'A'lâm al-Nubalâ'*, XIII, 403.

4. Of the Dâr al-Ma'ârif, Cairo, 1978 edtion, in 11 vols.

5. See for a list of the more important of these works, Bibliography to the present work.

deeds of the Prophet (*Dalâ'il* and *Shamâ'il*) and on the lives of the Companions and the *Tâbi'ûn*, together with commentaries of the Qur'ân and further compilations of *ḥadîth* came into existence.

It should be clear from the above brief survey that systematic collection and preservation of *ḥadîth* and writing of *sîrah /magâhazî* began almost simultaneously, by the middle of the first century H. at the latest, and that both emanated from the same urge for collecting and preserving the words, deeds and practices of the Prophet and his companions. In fact the same group of scholars were almost invariably involved in both types of activities. But whereas in collecting and recording a *ḥadîth* which had any bearing on a doctrinal or legal point they were generally very careful in checking their authorities and in applying other tests for authenticity, they appear to have been rather easy in their attitude in respect of reports of a historical nature.

The Qur'ân, the *ḥadîth* and the classical *sîrah* and ancillary works are complementary and supplementary to one another. We have to depend on all these three *sources* in order to obtain a fairly complete view of the Prophet's life and activities. In fact, beginning with the work of Ibn Isḥâq/Ibn Hishâm, the Qur'ân and the reoports have both been used in all subsequent writings on the *sîrah*.

The Qur'ân, though it does not provide complete historical date about the life and activities of the Prophet, is nevertheless unique in respect of authenticity and contemporaneity. Any information or viewpoint found in any other source, including even authentic *ḥadîth*, must be tested and verified, as far as possible, in the light of the Qur'ân. Anything found contrary to it or not in harmony with its facts, spirit and purport, must be rejected as untrue and unacceptable.

As regards *ḥadîth* and the *sîrah/maghâzî* literature, though they both are compilations of reports, a position of primacy must be accorded generally to the reports contained in the *ḥadîth* collections properly so called; because these were acknowledgedly compiled with more care to the rules determining authenticity. But if a report in any of the *ḥadîth* collections is found to be weaker in respect of *isnâd* and other tests than the one on the same point contained in a *sîrah* work, preference should of course be given to the latter. The simple principle, followed not only in historical but in all types of investigation, is that a weaker evidence must yield place to the stronger. In dealing with the *Sîrah* this principle may be spelt out in the following rules:

(1) Where any authentic *ḥadîth* is available on any point of fact or interpretation, it should be given preference to any other report if it is not in conformity with the former.

(2) Where two or more authentic reports on the same fact or point give divergent accounts or views, the one or ones for which support is available in the Qur'ân, the other reports of less authenticity and in the works on the *sîrah* should be preferred.

(3) The same rule should apply if such divergence is found in two or more equally weak reports on the same point or fact.

(4) Where neither the Qur'ân, nor any authentic *ḥadîth* provides information on any point or fact, reliance has of course to be made on the reports or accounts found in the *sîrah* literature, though these might not meet all the requirements of authenticity.

Since the *sîrah /maghâzî* works are also compilations of reports, it has two important consequences. In the first place, these works contain more or less the same materials, each succeeding work appearing largely to be a re-narration of its preceding work. New facts and information are few and far between. In view of this fact, the work of Ibn Isḥâq/Ibn Hishâm, based as it is on the works of their predecessors, has hardly been surpassed or superseded by subsequent works. Despite some of its obvious shortcomings, it still remains the basic work for the broad outlines of the Prophet's life-story. Secondly, the sameness of the information and materials in the different works suggests that though many of the works on *sîrah/maghâzî* have not come down to us in tact perhaps nothing of importance or significance has for that very reason been lost to us.

IV. THE SOURCES AND THE ORIENTALISTS

It is well-known that some orientalists have been instrumental in discovering, editing and publishing a number of original Arabic works and manuscripts. The present section is not intended to recapitulate that aspect of their work, far less to detract from the value of their work in this respect. Here only an attempt has been made to indicate the salient aspects of their attitude to and use of the sources in dealing with the Prophet's life.

As regards the Qur'ân it needs hardly any mentioning that the orientalists do not acknowledge it to be the word of Allah. If they did so, they would probably have ceased to be orientalists. On the contrary they attempt to

attribute its authorship, by some device or other, to the Prophet. From this premise they advance a number of related propositions or speculations. These are, in the main, as follows:

(1) That the Qur'ân (and for that matter Islam) is based on the ideas and facts derived from the systems of Judaism and Christianity prevailing in Arabia at the time.[1]

(2) That it represents the Prophet's ideas of socio-religious reforms arising out of his time, environment and circumstances.

(3) That the Prophet derived his literary style mainly from that of some ancient Arab poets.

(4) That the language of the Qur'ân is not quite pure Arabic, as claimed, but contains a large number of foreign words.[2]

These questions in fact relate to the whole nature and background of the Prophethood of Muḥammad (ﷺ) as also to the nature of the revelation he received. These have therefore been dealt with, as far as practicable, in their appropriate places in this work.[3]

Since the nineteenth century another trend among the orientalists has been to rearrange the texts of the Qur'ân in "chronological order" in order to trace what they assume to be the "gradual" development in Muḥammad's ﷺ ideas and attitudes. The line was indicated by Theodore Nöldeke. On the basis of it A. Rodwell carried out his translation of the Qur'ân.[4] Others like G. Well[5] and W. Muir[6] took up the theme almost simultaneously. The trend

1. Almost all the orientalists are of this view. A sort of consolidated statements may be found in:

(a) Richard Bell, *The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment*, Edinburgh, 1926, reprinted, London, 1968.

(b) C.C. Torrey, *The Jewish Foundation of Islam*, New York 1933; reprinted with. F. Rosenthal's Introduction, 1967.

2. A Jeffery, *Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ân*, Borado, 1937.

3. See Chapters IV, XI, XII, XIV-XX.

4. A. Rodwell, *The Coran, Translation with Suras arranged in Chronological order*, London, 1876. The first Muslim to follow suit appears to be Mirza Abul Fazl (of Bengal). See his *The Qur'ân. Arabic Text and English Translation, arranged chronologically*, 1911 (British Museum Cat. No. 14512. d. 15).

5. G. Weil, *Historisch-Kritische Einletung in den Koran*, Bielefeld and Leipzig, 1878.

6. W. Muir, *The Coran, its Composition and Teaching*, London, 1878.

has been carried to extremes, however, by Richard Bell.[1] Working on two basic but erroneous assumptions that (a) the normal unit of revelation was a short passage and (b) that the Prophet "revised"the texts before combining them into *sûrahs*, Bell classifies the Qur'ânic passages into various types, calling them the "sign" type, the "slogan" type, the "soothsayer" type, etc. He also makes a number of sheer conjectures to support his hypothesis of "revision". For instance, he advances the absurd suggestions that "reservations" introduced in the text by *illâ* (except) are later additions; and that the existence of what he calls an apparently "extraneous" theme in an otherwise homogeneous passage was due to the original text and the addition having been written on two different sides of the same writing material and then of their having been mixed up at the time of "editing".[2] Supporting Bell's suggestions in general, Watt pays special attention to the theme of "revision"and piles further assumptions upon those of Bell.[3]

The subject indeed needs an independent treatment. Only it may be pointed out here that the purpose of the orientalists seems to have been not so much to clarify as to confuse. As M. Hamidullah points out, almost every assumption of Bell is hedged in by qualifications and reservations like "perhaps", "seems to be" and the like, so much so that a reader is often unable to make out what the writer means. For instance, on p.75 (of the *Introduction to the Qur'ân*) there is the following passage: "These slogans [sic] are difficult to date, and it is doubtful if any of these which appear in the Qur'ân are very early, though some of them may quite well be so."[4] More of an admission of the confusing nature of Bell's suggestions are Watt's observations: "even if we suspect that the present order of the text is due to the use of two sides of the writing material, we cannot with any degree of certainty say what was on the back of what." "It has now become a question of dating separately each passage of a few verses. In the case of revisions, a single word even may have a different date from the rest of the verse."[5]

1. R. Bell, *Introduction to the Qur'ân*, Edinburgh University press 1953.
2. *Ibid*, 74-78, 83.
3. W.M. Watt, "The dating of the Qur'ân: A Review of Richard Bell's theories", *J.R.A.S.*, April, 1957, pp. 46-56. See also his revised edition of *Bell's Introduction to the Qur'ân*, Edinburgh University Press, 1970
4. M. Hamidullah's review of Bell's *Introduction to the Qur'ân, The Islamic Quarterly*, Vol. I, No. 4, Dec., 1954, pp. 239-243 (the observation is on p. 240).
5. Watt, "The Dating of the Qur'ân etc.", *op. cit.*, 53, 55.

It is on the basis of such dating of the Qur'ânic passages that the orientalists attempt to trace what they think the gradual development of the Prophet's ideas and concepts. For instance, Watt makes his own selection of what he considers to be the very early passages of the Qur'ân and on that basis suggests that at the beginning of his mission the Prophet had only a vague and imperfect concept of monotheism.[1] Some other features of the orientalists' use of the Qur'ân in dealing with the *sîrah* are as follows:

(a) Considering the Qur'ânic evidence in isolation without collating and supplementing it with the information contained in *ḥadîth* and the *sîrah* literature. Thus, for instance, it has been suggested that since the name "Muḥammad" does not occur in any Makkan *sûrah* the Prophet adopted the name in the Madinan period![2] By the same method of isolating the Qur'ânic evidence from other evidences it has been attempted to show that neither was persecution upon the Muslims at Makka severe, nor was there any attempt as such to kill the Prophet.

(b) Taking a passage out of its context and putting a wrong interpretation on it. An instance of this type of use of the Qur'ânic evidence is the suggestion that in 53:11-18 *(sûrat al-Najm)* the Prophet claimed to have seen God.[3]

(c) Taking or emphasizing just a part of an *'âyah,* to the exclusion of its other part and thus putting on it a meaning just the opposite to what is conveyed by the passage as a whole. An instance of this type is the suggestion, based on 16:103 (*sûrat al-Naḥl*) that the Qur'ân shows that the Prophet was tutored by a person![4]

(d) Wrong interpretation of a passage to get support for a specific assumption. For instance, the passage 17:74 (*sûrat al-'Isrâ'*) is interpreted to show that the desire for making a compromise with the unbelievers was so prolonged and strong in the Prophet that Allah had to intervene to restrain him from his doing so![5]

(e) Insistence upon only one shade of meaning of an expression or term to the exclusion of the other senses in which it is used in the Qur'ân itself. An instance is the interpretetation of the term *waḥy* in the sense of "suggestion"

1. See below, Chap. XXIII, sections I and II.
2. See below Ch. VI, section II.
3. See below Ch. XVIII, section V.
4. See below Ch. XI, section IV.
5. *Infra*, Ch. XXXI, sec. III.

only, not verbal communication from Allah.[1]

As in the case of the Qur'ân, so in that of *ḥadîth* the orientalists have attempted to dislodge it as the second most important source of information on the *sîrah* and on Islam in general..[2] It has been attempted to show that *ḥadîth* literature came into existence at the earliest in the second century of Islam, that the *isnâd* system in it is not reliable and that most of the reports, if not all, are fabrications brought into existence by party, political, dogmatic, juristic and ideological exigencies of the second/third century of Islam. The argumentations and assumptions of the previous scholars were brought to a climax, so to say, by J. Schacht in his *Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* published in 1950. Besides complementing and supporting his predecessors' views Schacht advanced two novel suggestions, namely, (a) that Islamic law falls outside the scope of the "religion" of Islam so that the Qur'ân might virtually be ignored as a source of Islamic jurisprudence and (b) that even the apparently historical *ḥadîth* was not free from suspicion because, as he says, this too was formulated on juristic considerations.

Not to speak of the Muslim scholars who view the above mentioned theories and assumptions untenable,[3] even many Western scholars find it difficult to accept Schacht's extreme conclusions. For instance N.J. Coulson, who otherwise recommends Schacht's work, points out that when his thesis "is systematically developed to the extent of holding that the evidence of legal traditions carries us back to about the year A.H.100 only; and when the authenticity of every alleged ruling of the Prophet is denied, a void is assumed, or rather created, in the picture of the development of law in early Muslim society. From a practical standpoint, and taking the attendant circumstances into consideration, the notion of such a vacuum is difficult to accept."[4]

1. See below Ch. XVIII, section III.

2. See for instance Ignaz Goldziher, *Moḥamedanische Studien* (first published 1890), Vol. II, tr. into English by C.R. Barber and S. M. Stern under title *Muslim Studies*, Vol. II, London, 1971; and A Guillaume, *The Traditions of Islam: An Introduction to the Study of the Hadith Literature*, Oxford, 1924.

3. See for instance Moḥsin 'Abd al-Nâẓir, *Dirâsât Goldziher fî al-Suunnah wa makânatuhâ al-'ilmiyyah*, (Arabic text), unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Tunis, 1404 / 1984; and M. Luqman Salafi, *Naqd al-Ḥadîth 'inda al-Muḥaddithîn sanadan wa matanan wa daḥḍ mazâ'im al-Mustashriqîn*, Riyadh, 1984.

4. N.J. Coulson, *A History of Islamic Law*, London, 1964, pp. 64-65. See also his "Euro- =

The views and assumptions of Schacht have been dealt with specially by M. M. A'ẓamî. It has been shown that Schacht's views about *isnâd* are wrong[1] and that his suggestion regarding the "Living Tradition" and its having been projected back onto the Prophet are unfounded.[2] By a reference to the specific juridical activities of the Prophet as well as to the first century Islamic legal literature it has been shown that Schacht is wrong in thinking that law in the first century of Islam was not based on the Qur'ân and the *sunnah*. Taking Schacht on his own grounds and quoting in extenso the very texts and authorities cited by him, A'ẓamî has convincingly demonstrated that in each case Schacht has taken his argument out of context, has misunderstood or misinterpreted the texts and has otherwise advanced assumptions and conclusions not quite substantiated by the authorities he has adduced in their support. Further, it has been shown that in forming his opinions about such jurisconsults as Imâm Mâlik, Schacht has relied not on their own writings but on what their contemporaries or near-contemporaries have said about them.

It is on such faulty and untenable Goldziher-Schacht assumptions about *ḥadîth* that the orientalists have generally based their approach to it as a source of the Prophet's life-story. And this approach to *ḥadîth* and their views about the Qur'ân determine their attitude to the *sîra* literature in general. Thus one group of scholars take up the position that the latter is essentially made up of *ḥadîth* material arranged in biographical order; but since *ḥadîth* literature is not reliable and is in any case only elaborations of the Qur'ânic materials, the only independent source about the Prophet's life is the Qur'ân; but then as the latter does not provide any chronological details and restricts itself at best to allusions and indirect references, hardly anything definite can be known about the Prophet's life. In other words, there is almost an insuperable historical "problem"regarding him.[3]

Differing from this group, the other group of orientalists treat the *sîrah* literature as the main source for the Prophet's life, though they do not ignore

= pean criticism of Ḥadîth Literature" in *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Arabic Literature to the end of the Umayyad Period*, Cambridge, 1983, pp. 317-321.

1. M.M. A'ẓamî, *Studies in Early Hadith Literature*, Beirut, 1968, Chaps. VI, VII.

2. M.M. A'ẓamî, *On Schacht's Origins of Muḥammadan Jurisprudence*, King Saud University, Riyadh & John Willy & Sons, Inc, New York, 1985.

3. See for instance Régis Blachère, *La Problème de Maḥomet Essai de biographie critique du foundateur de l'Islam*, Paris, 1952.

the value of the Qur'ân. This position is best summed up by Watt who says: "What in fact Western biographers have done is to assume the truth of the broad outlines of the picture....given by the *Sîrah*, and to use this as the framework into which to fit as much Qur'ânic material as possible. The sounder methodolgy is to regard the Qur'ân and the early traditional accounts as complementary sources..." [1]

The expression "the early traditional accounts" used in the above passage refers to the *sîrah* literature, not to the "tradition" or more properly *ḥadîth*, for which Watt uses another word, "anecdotes."[2] In his support for the reports in the *sîrah* literature Watt even seems to defend what is called the family *isnâd* system;[3] though, like the other orientalists in general, he considers the *isnâd* system in the *ḥadîth* literature proper as of little value.

It may be observed that the first group of scholars are near the truth in thinking that the *sîrah* literature is more or less another version of *ḥadîth;* but they are very much wrong in assuming that there is nothing in the *sîrah* that might be considered independent historical material. More particulary, they are wrong in assuming, as one of their spokesmen says, that "in the face of the Christian historical sources which attest the miraculous figure and the divinity of Jesus," the need for doing the same for the founder of Islam arose, and "the already existing dogmatic and juristic *ḥadîth* are collected and chronologically arranged."[4] The question of the correctness of the premise apart, it may be pointed out that the *sîrah* literature is not made up only or primarily of materials designed to provide analogous miracles for the Prophet!

Similarly the second group of scholars are right in holding that the *sîrah* literature provides the broad outlines of the Prophet's life; but they are wrong in assuming that the *sîrah,* though a distinct corpus of literature, is essentially different from *ḥadîth* literature or that the two developed in two watertight compartments, in two different periods, the former in an earlier period

1. W.M. Watt, *M. at M.*, XV. See also his "The materials used by Ibn Isḥâq" in Bernard Lewis & P.M. Holt (eds.), *Historians of the Middle East*, London, 1962, 23-34.

2. Watt, *M. at M.*, XI.

3. Watt, "The reliability of Ibn Isḥâq's sources" in *La Vie Du Prophét Maḥomet*, Colloque de Strassbourg, October, 1980, (pp. 31-43), pp. 40-41. Silmilar support to the *isnâd* system is given also by Maxime Rodinson in "A Critical Survey of Modern Studies on Muḥammad", in Marlin Swartz (ed.) *Studies in Islam*, London, 1981 (pp. 23-85), p. 44.

4. C.H. Becker, quoted in *Historians of the Middle East, op. cit.,* p. 23.

and the latter in a subsequent period. As already shown, the compilation of *sîrah* literature grew out of the same urge for collecting and preserving the *sunnah* of the Prophet and that it as well as the collection and preservation of *ḥadîth* started simultaneously, by the second half of the first century of Islam at the latest, and at the hands of almost the same group of scholars.

But though differing in their attitude to the *sîrah* literature as such, in practice both groups of scholars make use more or less of all the three sources in their treatment of the Prophet's life. In doing so they adopt almost the same methods in respect of the "reports" in the *sîrah* literature (also in *ḥadîth* literature) as they use in respect of the Qur'ânic evidence. Thus often they:

(a) take a particular report in isolation, without collating or supplementing it with the Qur'ânic or other evidence on the same subject;

(b) make use of weaker or even spurious reports if they fall in line with a particular point of view, without considering at all the question of the authenticity of the reports in question or without taking into consideration other reports on the same subject that tend to give a different view ;

(c) take the report out of context and put on it a wrong and untenable interpretation;

(d) take only a part of a report to support a particular point of view, instead of taking the report as a whole which would otherwise give a different picture; and

(e) in so doing, impute motives to reporters or even to the authors that are in no way substantiated.

Each and every one of these aspects of the orientalists' use of the "reports" whether in the *sîrah* literature proper or in the *ḥadîth* literature would be clear as we proceed with the story in the present work.

CHAPTER II
THE BACKGROUND

I. THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

Arabia is the largest peninsula on the surface of the earth, being nearly one-third of Europe in size. It forms the southwestern wing of Asia, joined with Africa by the Sinai desert and Egypt. It is surrounded on three sides by waters—the Red Sea to the west, the Arabian (Persian) Gulf to the east and the Arabian Sea to the south. Its northern boundary may be said to be an imaginary line from the Gulf of al-'Aqaba in the west to the Tigris-Euphrates valley in the east. Geographically the deserts of Syria and Iraq form part of the peninsula. Geologists think that it once formed a continuation of the Sahara desert on the one hand and the Central Iranian and the Gobi Desert on the other; and that subsequently it became separated by the depression of the Red Sea which, however, could not alter its arid nature.

The Arabian peninsula is skirted in the south and west by mountain ranges of varying heights, reaching some 14000 feet in the south and some 10000 feet in the north. Beginning from Ḥaḍramaut in the south these ranges run almost parallel to the coastline, through Yaman, the Asir region and all along the Hijaz including the towns of Makka and Ṭâ'if and meeting the ranges in the Sinai, Palestine, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. There are small ranges in the eastern region also, particularly in Oman where the Al-Akhḍar mountain rises to a height of about 10000 feet. On the west the mountains rise rather steeply, leaving a narrow coastal belt of plain and comparatively fertile lands. From the mountainous region in the west, which averages an altitude of about 4000 feet at about one hundred and fifty miles inland, the country to the east is a vast plateau, highlighted by the plateau of Najd, sloping gradually to the east coast.

The mountain ranges in the south and north prevent respectively the monsoon rains from the Indian Ocean and the winter rains from the Atlantic and the Mediterranean Sea from reaching the interior of the land. Hence rainfall is generally scanty in most parts, though there might be occasional heavy downpours at many places including Makka, Madina, Ṭâ'if and Riyadh. In dim antiquity the land was probably more humid and rainfall more plenty, as indicated by the existence of numerous *wâdîs* or stream-beds. Of the desert proper, there are three main regions — Al-Nufûd in the

north, Al-Rub' al-Khâlî (the Vacant Quarter) in the south, which in itself is almost the size of France, and Al-Dahna, which is a sort of a corridor of desert linking the two above mentioned northern and southern deserts and running by the east central region. The rest of the peninsula is steppeland, together with vast areas of fissured lava lands, particularly in the central, western and northern regions. The steppelands are sprinkled with numerous fertile oases and settlements. There are some rermarkably fertile regions in the west and south, as also along the coast. In general Arabia is one of the hottest and driest countries of the world. The climates are rather extreme. It is very hot during the summer, and quite cold in the winter. In the winter season the temperature in some places in the north and south falls far below zero degree centigrade.

A look at the map would at once make it clear that Arabia forms a link by land as well as by sea between Asia, Africa and Europe — the three continents that till the geographical discoveries of the 15th/16th centuries were thought to constitute the entire world. Arabia is situated in the middle of this world. Not only that. From time immemorial it has been surrounded by a belt of ancient civilizations — the Nile Valley (Egyptian) civilization in the west, the Phoenician and Assyrian civilizations in the north, the Tigris-Euphartes Valley (Babylonian) civilization, the Persian civilization and the Indus Valley civilizations in the north-east and east. Further east-north-east lay the Chinese civilization. Arabia in ancient times was thus very much in the middle of the then "civilized" world. Modern researches show that it was the Semitic emigrants from the heart of Arabia who participated in building up the Egyptian, the Phoenician, the Assyrian and the Babylonian civilizations. And since dim antiquity Arabia also remained in constant trade and commercial contacts with the lands of Asia, Africa and Europe. Ships from India and the "Far East" touched its southern ports and sailed up the Red Sea; while land routes connected it with all the three continents. It lay on the highroad of world commerce and its inhabitants were the middle-men between the traders of the outer world The geographical situation of Arabia has made it strategically and commercially important throughout the ages.

The internal geographical features of Arabia and its climate prevented any foreign intrusion into it . Consequently, its inhabitants have through ages retained their ethnic purity. Historians are agreed that Arabia is the cradle and habitat of the Semitic population (descended from Sâm, son of Nûḥ, p.b.h.). As P.K. Hitti observes, though the term "Semitic" has of late come to

be used in the West more generally with reference to the Jews, because of their concentration in America, it is more appropriately applicable to the inhabitants of Arabia who, more than any other group of people, have retained the Semitic characteristics in their physical features, manners, customs, habits of thought and language. "The people of Arabia have remained virtually the same throughout all the recorded ages."[1]

Arab historians and traditions classify the inhabitants of Arabia into two broad divisions, their extinct ancestors and the surviving people. The extinct ancestors are called *al-'Arab al-Bâ'idah* (the extinct Arabs) who lived and flourished in dim antiquity but who have gone almost entirely out of existence. Examples of these extinct Arabs are the 'Âd, and the Thamûd, the Ṭasm, the Jadîs, the 'Amlaq and others of whom virtually no survivors are found. The Qur'ân makes repeated references to those bygone peoples, particularly to the 'Âd and the Thamûd. The former flourished in south Arabia (Ḥaḍramaut region) and the latter in north Arabia, particularly in the region of Al-Ḥijr. The Prophets Hûd[2] and Ṣâliḥ[3] (p.b.t.) were sent respectively to these two peoples. Recent excavations have unearthed archaeological remains that go only to confirm the truth of what the Qur'ân, the ancient Arab traditions and the Arab historians state in respect of these extinct ancestors of theirs. The Thamûd are mentioned by name in an inscription of the Assyrian King Sargon II, dated 715 B.C. They are also mentioned by Ptolemy and Pliny.[4]

The surviving people are divided into two categories, *al-'Arab al-'Âribah* or the Aboriginal Arabs and *al-'Arab al-Musta'ribah* or the Naturalized Arabs. The first are the descendants of Ya'rub son of Yashjub, son of Qaḥṭân (Joktan of the Old Testament).[5] They are therefore more generally called Qahtanite Arabs. Their habitat was Yaman. The famous Sabaean and Himyarite kingdoms and their high degree of civilization were the work of

1. P.K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (first published 1937), 10th edn. (1970), 11th print, 1986, pp. 8-9.

2. *Sûrah* XI of the Qur'ân is named after him. See specially its *'âyahs* 50-60. See also 7:65-72; 25:123-140 and 46:21-26.

3. See Q. 7:73-79; 11:61-68; 24:141-159; 27:45-53.

4. *First Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1913-1936, VIII, p. 736.

5. Qaḥṭân was the son of 'Âbir, son of Shâlikh, son of Arfakhshad, son of Sâm, son of Nûḥ (p.b.h.).

these Qahtanite Arabs. The Qur'ân makes special mention of the Sabaeans.[1]

Since time immemorial, however, many Qahtanite Arabs had migrated from their original habitat and spread over all parts of the Arabian peninsula. More lately the process of migration received an increased impetus due to the first bursting of the Dam of Ma'rib and the Roman displacement of the Arabs in the maritime trade in the first century A.C. Of those who thus migrated from time to time mention may by made of the tribe of *Azd.* One branch of this tribe, Banû Tha'labah ibn 'Amr, first settled in the region of Al-Tha'labiyyah but subsequently moved on to Madina. Their descendants were the famous 'Aws and Khazraj tribes who in the course of time became the Helpers (*anṣâr*) of the Prophet. Another branch of the *Azd* tribe, Banû Ḥârithah ibn 'Amr settled in the Hijaz and came to be better known as Banû Khuzâ'ah. They in the course of time occupied Makka displacing its earlier inhabitants, Banû Jurhum. Another important Qahtanite tribe, Banû Lakhm, settled in Al-Ḥîrah (modern Kufa region in Iraq) where they founded a buffer state between Arabia and the Persian Empire (roughly 200-602 A.C.). Another powerful tribe, Banû Ghassân, settled in lower Syria and founded the Ghassanid kingdom there, playing a similar role of a buffer state between the Byzantine Empire and Arabia. The Ghassanid state came to an end on account of the Sasanid Khusraw Parwez's capture of the region, including Damascus and Jerusalem, in 613-614 A.C.

Two other powerful Qahtanite tribes who settled in Arabia were Banû Ṭayyi' and Banû Kindah. The former settled in north Arabia, in the region between the 'A'a and Salma mountains, which are for that reason better known as the Ṭayyi' Mountains. The famous Ḥâtim al-Ṭayyi' belonged to this tribe. Banû Kindah, on the other hand, settled in central Arabia and established a kingdom there. Their rulers, unlike the others, bore the title of king (*malik*).

The Naturalized Arabs, *al-'Arab al-Musta'ribah*, were the descendants of Prophet Ibrâhîm through his eldest son Prophet Ismâ'îl (p.b.t.). It must not be supposed that they were later in coming to Arabia than the above mentioned Qahtanite tribes from the south. In fact Prophet Ismâ'îl and his mother settled at Makka long before the dispersal of the above mentioned Qahtanite tribes in different parts of Arabia. It should also be noted that

1. *Sûrah* 34 of the Qur'ân is named after them. See specially its *'âyahs* 15-21. See also 27:22.

Prophet Ibrâhîm was no non-Arab or non-Semitic person. He descended from the same Semitic Arabs who had long previously migrated and settled in the Tigris-Euphrates valley (Babylonia). In that sense his coming to Makka and settling his son and wife there was a sort of return to the original home of his ancestors. The descendants of Ismâ'îl are called "naturalized Arabs" not really because they were originally non-Semitic outsiders, but mainly because their ancestors had long before left the land.

II. THE KA'BA AND THE ABRAHAMIC TRADITION

The story of Prophet Ibrâhîm's migration from Babylonia to Syria-Palestine (Kan'ân), then to Egypt, then his return to Palestine and subsequently his coming with his wife Hâjar and son Ismâ'îl to Makka is well-known. These epoch-making travels took place roughly at the beginning of the second millennium B.C. Ibrâhîm had at first called his own people to abandon the worship of idols and other objects like the heavenly bodies and to worship the One Only God.[1] They, however, instead of responding to his call, put him to various vexations and ultimately to the test of fire from which God protected and saved him.[2] Only his wife Sârah and nephew Lûṭ believed and accepted his call. Under God's directive[3] Ibrâhîm, accompanied by Sârah and Lûṭ first migrated to Hârân (in Syria) and then on to Kan'ân (Palestine). At both the places he preached God's message and called the people to worship Him alone. Next he travelled to Egypt where the reigning monarch initially designed evil against him but was subsequently attracted to him and respected him. The ruler presented Hâjar to Ibrâhîm and Sârah. Hâjar was originally a princess and queen to another ruler but was captured in a war by the Egyptian monarch.[4] With Hâjar Ibrâhîm returned to Palestine and subsequently married her. Ibrâhîm had hitherto no child. So he prayed to God for a son. God granted his prayer and gave him the good news that a forbearing son would be born to him.[5] As Hâjar became pregnant Sârah grew jealous of her; but God blessed her. According to the Old Testament an angel visited her and gave her the good tidings that she would give birth to the first son to Ibrâhîm and that she should name the son Ismâ'îl.[6] In due

1. Q. 6:74, 80-83; 19:41-50; 21:51-71; 26:70-82; 29:16-18, 24-25; 37:83-98.
2. Q. 21:68-70.
3. Q. 21:71.
4. Ibn Khaldûn, *Târîkh*, II /I / 79; Ibn Sa'd, I, 48, 49.
5. Q. 37:99-100.
6. Genesis 16:7-11.

course she gave birth to a son, the first-born to Ibrâhîm, and the child was named Ismâ'îl. Ibrâhîm was at that time 86 years old.

Till Ibrâhîm's return from Egypt Lûṭ had all along been with him. Then Lûṭ was called to Prophethood and was directed to preach to the people inhabiting the then prosperous region lying to the southeast of the Dead Sea. The sinful people rejected his repeated appeals to reform themselves and to obey Allah. Ultimately Allah destroyed the intransigent population and their habitat, saving Lûṭ and a few of his believing followers.[1] This happened some 12 or 13 years after the birth of Ismâ'îl. The scenes of destruction and devastation are still visible in the region.

After Ismâ'îl's birth Sârah grew all the more jealous of Hâjar so that Ibrâhîm found it necessary to separate her and the child from near Sârah. Under Allah's directive and guidance he travelled with Hâjar and Ismâ'îl all the way from Palestine to the valley of Makka and left the mother and the child, with some provisions and water, at the spot near which the Ka'ba stands. It was then an uninhabited place. Hâjar of course enquired of Ibrâhîm why he was leaving them there. In reply he said that he was doing so according to Allah's directive and desire. The virtuous and believing Hâjar willingly submitted to Allah's will, expressing her confidence that Allah would not then let them down.[2]

Allah of course did not let Hâjar and Ismâ'îl down. As the little amount of water with them was soon exhausted Hâjar went in search of water. She ran frantically between the nearby Ṣafâ and Marwâh hills in search of water. As she thus completed seven runs between the two hills, the angel Jibrîl appeared before her by Allah's comamnd and caused the well of Zamzam to gush forth from the ground for Hâjar and Ismâ'îl. The provision of this well for them was indeed the beginning of their peaceful existence there. For water in those days (as also subsequently) was the most valuable wealth in desert Arabia. Soon a Qaḥṭânî tribe of Yaman was passing by the region. Noticing that a bird was flying over the spot of Zamzam they correctly guessed that there was water there. They reached the spot and sought and obtained Hâjar's permission to settle there.[3] Thus the spot was settled and it

1. Q. 6:86:7:80-84; 11:77-83; 15:57-77; 21:74-75; 26:160-175; 27:54-58; 29:26, 28-35; 37:133-138; 51:31-37; 54:34-39; 66:10.

2. *Bukhârî*, No. 3364.

3. *Bukhârî*, no. 3365.

soon grew to be an impoprtant trading centre, lying conveniently on the trade route from Yaman to the north and vice-versa. Ismâ'îl grew up among the Jurhum tribe, learning the pure Arabic tongue from them. When grown up he successively married two ladies from the Jurhum tribe, the second wife being the daughter of Muḍâḍḍ ibn 'Amr, leader of the Jurhum tribe.

In the meantime Ibrâhîm continued to visit Makka from time to time to know about the well-being of his son and wife.[1] On one such occasion, when Ismâ'îl had reached the age of understanding, Ibrâhîm received Allah's command in dream to sacrifice his dear and only one son. He disclosed it to Ismâ'îl. The virtuous son of the virtuous father, who himself was to be a Prophet of Allah, Ismâ'îl unhesitatingly consented and asked his father to carry out Allah's behest. Accordingly Ibrâhîm took Ismâ'îl to a suitable spot[2], made him lie on the ground, face downward, and was about to strike his neck with knife when Allah's call reached Ibrâhîm saying that he had already passed the test and that he should instead sacrifice an animal.[3] The test was for both father and son and both had creditably passed it. It was as a reward for having passed this test that Allah further blessed Ibrâhîm and gave him the good tidings that He would favour him with another son by his first wife Sârah, though both he and she had grown quite old.[4] Thus another son, Isḥâq, was born to Ibrâhîm by Sârah when Ismâ'îl was about 14 years old.

On another occasion when Ibrâhîm visited Makka Allah bade him build a house for His worship.[5] Accordingly he built the Ka'ba, assisted by his son Ismâ'îl. As they raised the foundation they prayed to Allah to accept their good deed, to render them submissive to His will, to raise from among their progeny a people submissive to Allah and to raise from among them a Prophet who would purify them and recite unto them His scripture and directives.[6] Further they prayed Allah to make Makka and its vicinity a land of peace and security and to feed its people abundantly — "such of them as

1. *Ibid*

2. Some reports say it to be at Minâ; some others think it to be near the Marwâh hill. The Qur'ân specifically states that both father and son *submitted to Allah's will* (37:103, أسلما).

3. Q. 37:102-107.

4. Q. 37:112-113.

5. *Bukhârî*, no. 3365

6. Q. 2:127-129.

believe in Allah and the Last Day."[1] When the building of the Ka'ba was completed Allah commanded Ibrâhîm to proclaim to mankind the duty of pilgrimage to the House (Ka'ba).[2] So Ibrâhîm introduced the rite of pilgrimage to the Ka'ba.

The Qur'ân as well as the Bible state that Allah especially blessed Ibrâhîm and both his sons, Ismâ'îl and Isḥâq, intimating that their descendants would multiply into nations.[3] Indeed, it was according to the Divine plan that the two sons were settled in two different lands. Ibrâhîm lived long to see his sons grow into maturity, establishing their respective families. According to the Old Testament Ibrâhîm lived for 175 years and when he died both Ismâ'îl and Isḥâq together buried him.[4]

Ismâ'îl also lived long for 137 years and left behind him twelve sons from whom twelve tribes arose.[5] They and their descendants lived at Makka; but as their numbers increased they scattered over the other parts of Arabia. Of the tribes who arose out of the twelve sons of Ismâ'îl, those from the eldest two, Nâbat and Qaydar (Kedar of the Old Testament) became more prominent. The descendants of Nâbat migrated from Makka towards the north where, in the course of time, they founded the famous Nabatian Kingdom (sixth century B.C. to 105 A.C.) with Petra as its capital. The descendants of Qaydar continued to live at Makka and its vicinity for long till the time of 'Adnân, probably the 38th in descent from Qaydar. The descendants of 'Adnân through his son Ma'dd and grandson Nizâr multiplied so greatly that they were in the course of time divided into numerous tribes and spread over all parts of Arabia including Bahrayn and Iraq. Most of the tribes who subsequently attained prominence traced their decsent from 'Adnân and thus called themselves 'Adnânites. Such famous tribes as Taghlib, Ḥanîfah, Bakr ibn Wâ'il, Qays ibn 'Aylân, Sulaym, Hawâzin, Ghaṭafân, Tamîm, Ḥudhayl ibn Mudrikah, Asad ibn Khuzaymah, Thaqîf, and Quraysh (sons of Fihr ibn Mâlik ibn al-Naḍr ibn Kinânah) all traced their descent from 'Adnân and

1. Q. 2:126.

2. Q. 22:27.

3. Genesis 12:2; 16:10.

4. Genesis 25:7-9.

5. The old Testament, after mentioning the names of the twelve sons of Ismâ'îl, states: "These *are* the sons of Ishmael, and these *are* their names, by their towns, and by their castles; twelve princes according to their nations."—Genesis 25:16.

through him from Ismâ'îl and Ibrâhîm.

Indeed, this Abrahamic tradition was the most important and universal feature in the social life of the Arabs. It was the symbol of their unity and identity, despite their division into numerous independent tribes. It found expression in their practical life in various ways. Each and every tribe meticulously maintained their genealogy tracing it ultimately to Ismâ'îl and Ibrâhîm. They universally practised circumcision as an Abrahamic tradition (*sunnah*). All the peoples of all the tribes believed the Ka'ba to have been built by Ibrâhîm and they considered it as their spiritual centre. They even placed images of Ibrâhîm and Ismâ'îl along with other images, in the Ka'ba. In pursuance of the Abrahamic tradition all the Arabs used to perform pilgrimage to the Ka'ba and Makka, to make sacrifice of animals in connection with that rite, and to circumambulate the Ka'ba. And despite their relapse into gross idolatry they did not forget the name of Allah, Whom they regarded as the Supreme Lord — a faint remnant of monotheism which Ibrâhîm and Ismâ'îl had taught. And most imporant of all, when the Prophet asked them, through the Qur'ânic text, to revert to the true faith of their forefather Ibrâhîm (*millata 'abîkum Ibrâhîm*) they did not controvert him on this point of their ancestry going back to Ibrâhîm, although they were only too ready to oppose the Prophet on all conceivable grounds. This is worth emphasizing; for nothing was more obnoxious to an Arab than to ascribe a false or imaginary ancestry to him.

III. MAKKA AND ARABIA PRIOR TO THE RISE OF ISLAM

After the death of Prophet Ismâ'îl his descendants remained in control of the affairs of Makka for some time. Then their maternal relatives, Banû Jurhum, snatched power from them and continued to rule Makka for several centuries. They were then defeated and ousted from Makka by Banû Khuzâ'ah in alliance with Banû Bakr ibn 'Abd Manât ibn Kinânah. At the time of their leaving Makka Banû Jurhum destroyed the Zamzam well by covering it with earth and burying on the spot some of their arms and armour and two golden gazelles. The well thus remained covered and unspotted for a long time.

Banû Khuzâ'ah remained at the helm of affairs for another long period of several centuries. Ultimately Quṣayy ibn Kilâb of the Quraysh tribe, who belonged to the main branch of the descendants of Prophet Ismâ'îl, ousted Banû Khuzâ'ah from Makka, with the assistance of Banû Kinânah. This

event took place some two centuries before the birth of the Prophet. Quṣayy gathered all the Quraysh people under his banner and settled them in and around Makka. He also assumed control of all the traditional functions relating to the administration of Makka and the Ka'ba. These functions were mainly:

(1) *Al-Ḥijâbah,* i.e., possession of the key of the Ka'ba and being in charge of its upkeep.

(2) *Al-Siqâyah,* i.e., being in charge of supplying water to the pilgrims at the time of *ḥajj* and also, subsequently, the right to administer the well

(3) *Al-Rifâdah,* i.e., being in charge of supplying provisions to and feeding the pilgrims during the *ḥajj* season.

(4) *Al-Nadwah,* i.e., the right to convene the consultative council of the tribe to discuss and decide upon the affairs of civic life.

(5) *Al-Liwâ',* i.e., command in war and right to bear the standard of the tribe.

Quṣayy used to exercise all these functions assisted by his four sons. He also built a house for tribal consultation near the Ka'ba, called *Dâr al-Nadwah,* setting its door towards the Ka'ba. All matters of peace and war and of civil administration of Makka were discussed and decisions taken on them in the *Dâr al-Nadwah.* The chief of each clan spoke on behalf of his clan. Decisions in the council were adopted by unanimity. At the time of *ḥajj* Quṣayy used to call upon all the Quraysh to contribute towards the expenses of providing food, water and meals for the pilgrims, especially during their stay at Minâ, stressing that they were the guests of Allah. The practice thus introduced by Quṣayy continued to be followed even after the establishment of Islam.

Quṣayy had four sons, 'Abd al-Dâr, 'Abd Manâf, 'Abd al-'Uzzâ and 'Abd. of these four sons the second, 'Abd Manâf, was a natural leader of men. He became prominent and was respected by all even during the lifetime of his father Quṣayy. The latter, however, selected his eldest son, 'Abd al-Dâr, to succeed to all the above mentioned functions of the administration of Makka and the Ka'ba.[1] All the four sons accepted Quṣayy's decision. Accordingly, after his death, 'Abd al-Dâr exercised those functions. After his

1. Ibn Hishâm, I., 129-130.

death, however, differences arose between his sons (Banû 'Abd al-Dâr) and those of 'Abd Manâf (Banû 'Abd Manâf). The Quraysh clans were divided on the issue — one group supporting the claims of Banû 'Abd Manâf, the others supporting Banû 'Abd al-Dâr. Banû 'Abd Manâf were supported by Banû Asad ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzâ ibn Quṣayy, Banû Zuhrah ibn Kilâb, Banû Taym ibn Murrah ibn Kilâb, and Banû al-Ḥârith ibn Fihr ibn Mâlik ibn al-Naḍr. Banû 'Abd al-Dâr, on the other hand, were supported by Banû Makhzûm ibn Yaqaẓah ibn Murrah, Banû Sahm ibn 'Amr ibn Huṣayṣ ibn Ka'b, Banû Jumaḥ ibn 'Amr ibn Huṣayṣ ibn Ka'b and Banû 'Adiyy ibn Ka'b. The two groups formed two rival alliances — the former being called *Al-Muṭayyabûn* because of their having reportedly dipped their hands in a bowl-ful of scent and thus vowed to support Banû 'Abd Manâf; while the other group came to be known as *Al-Aḥlâf*, or the Confederates, because they entered into a formal alliance, *ḥilf*, for supporting Banû 'Abd al-Dâr.[1] The two rival groups were about to engage themselves in an armed conflict over the issue when good sense prevailed and a compromise was worked out. According to the compromise, Banû 'Abd Manâf were given the two functions of *Al-Siqâyah* and *Al-Rifâdah*, while the three other functions of *Al-Ḥijâbah*, *Al-Nadwah* and *Al-Liwâ'* remained with Banû 'Abd al-Dâr. This arrangement continued to be followed till the establishment of Islam.

The functions of *Al-Siqâyah* and *Al-Rifâdah* thus given to Banû 'Abd Manâf were exercised by 'Abd Manâf's second son Hâshim because his elder brother, 'Abd Shams, was of straitened means and was almost always out on trade travels. Hâshim, like his father, was a man of parts and became the natural spokesman of the Quraysh in their international relations. He concluded a series of trade treaties with the Byzantie authorities and Abyssinia. As a result the commercial operations of the Quraysh expanded greatly in both the north and the south, particularly in Syria and Abyssinia. He also introduced the system of two principal yearly trade travels to foreign lands, one in the winter and the other in the summer. Hâshim died at Ghaza in the course of one such trade travels.

The functions of *Al-Siqâyah* and *Al-Rifâdah* then devolved on Hâshim's younger brother Al-Muṭṭalib ibn 'Abd Manâf. Like his brother Al-Muṭṭalib also was endowed with the qualities of head and heart. The Quraysh used to call him *Al-Fayḍ* on account of his generosity and outstanding personality.

1. *Ibid.*, 131-132.

After his death the charge of *Al-Siqâyah* and *Al-Rifâdah* passed on to Hâshim's son, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the grandfather of the Prophet.

'Abd al-Muṭṭalib had a long life and exercised the two functions for more than half a century. His most outstanding achievement was the re-excavation and restoration of the Zamzam Well. Since its destruction and burial by Banû Jurhum it had remained untapped and people had lost its trace. In fact the predecessors of the Quraysh had placed the statues of two of their gods and goddesses, 'Isâf and Nâ'ila, on the spot where they and their successors used to sacrifice their animals for their gods and goddesses. It is reported that 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was commanded in dreams over three consecutive nights to re-excavate the well and was informed about its location. Accordingly he started digging up the spot, assisted by his then only son Al-Ḥârith. As he dug down to some depth he found the arms and armour and also the two golden gazelles buried there by Banû Jurhum. Digging further down he struck the main stone with which the mouth of the well had been covered. He cried out of joy and praised Allah for his success. The Quraysh had initially raised some objection to his disturbing their sacrificing spot; but when they saw that 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib had rightly spotted the well, they claimed to have a share in it saying that it actually belonged to their common ancestor Ismâ'îl. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib did not agree to the proposal saying that he alone had been divinely selected for restoring and administering the well. The matter was ultimately settled either by the usual process of divination by arrows or by drawing lots which fell in 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's favour. The Quraysh peacefully allowed the latter to own and administer the well. He fixed the two golden gazelles at the door of the Ka'ba. This is the first recorded instance of decorating the Ka'ba door with gold.[1]

The discovery and re-excavation of the Zamzam well heightened the prestige and influence of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib. The possession of this perennial source of water also greatly facilitated his performing the functions of *Al-Siqâyah* and *Al-Rifâdah*. Indeed during 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's time these two functions became the most important aspects of the civic life of Makka. Moreover his exercise of these functions for more than half a century made him well known throughout Arabia and to all the Arab tribes and visitors to Makka. And by virtue of his age, wisdom and wealth he became the virtual chief of the Quraysh in both their internal and external affairs.

1. *Ibid.*, 142-147.

Besides the re-exacavtion of the Zamzam well, the other notable event durring 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's time was the invasion of Makka by Abrahah, the Abyssinian governor of Yaman. He had built an imposing cathedral at Ṣan'â', called *Al-Qullays* to which he determined to divert the pilgrimage and trade of the Arabs. He organized a huge army well equipped with horses and elephants and, under the pretext of his cathedral having been desecrated by an Arab, led an expedition against Makka with a view to destroying the Ka'ba. Some Arab tribes attempted to resist him on the way; but they all were defeated. Coming by way of Ṭâ'if he ultimately reached the vicinity of Makka with his army and elephants, and plundered and captured whatever he got in the outskirts of the city, including two hundred camels belonging to 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib. Abrahah then sent his emissary to the city to tell its "chief" that he (Abrahah) had no intention to fight and kill its people but had come only to dismantle the Ka'ba. If, therefore, they submitted peacefully, they would be spared their lives. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib had already had consultations with the chiefs of the other clans and it had been decided that there was no use opposing the irresistible forces of Abrahah. When the latter's emissary came to the city everyone pointed out to 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib as the chief whom to talk to. When therefore the emissary met 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib he informed him that the Quraysh had no intention to fight Abrahah and were rather desirous of a peaceful settlement. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was therefore invited to see Abrahah in his camp. Accompanied by some of his sons and a couple of other leaders he went with the emissary to Abrahah's camp. It is reported that the latter was so impressed by the personality and disposition of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib that he came down from his throne and sat with the latter on a seat laid on the floor. He then asked 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib to say what he had to say. The latter asked for his two hundred camels to be returned to him. Abrahah expressed his surprise and disappointment, saying that he had expected the Quraysh leader to speak to him about the fate of the Ka'ba and to entreat him to spare it. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib calmly replied that he was the owner only of the camels, not of the Ka'ba which had its Lord and Protector Who, if He so willed, would see to its safety and protection. Intoxicated by the superiority of his forces Abrahah arrogantly replied that the Lord of the Ka'ba would be of no avail against his forces. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib only remarked that that was for him (Abrahah) and the Lord to see. Thus finishing his talk with Abrahah 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib returned to the city and advised the Quraysh people to desert their homes and to take shelter on mountain tops and in the vales to

see what Abrahah would do to the Ka'ba. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib himself, before leaving his home, went to the Ka'ba and then by touching its door prayed and beseeched the Lord to protect His House.[1]

The Lord did indeed intervene to save the Ka'ba. As Abrahah was about to sweep down on the city, a huge flock of birds (*'abâbîl*) appeared in the sky, each with *sijjîl* stones (brimstones) in its bills and claws, which they rained down upon Abrahah's army. Everyone who was struck by the stone died, his body decomposing quickly. The invading army was thus almost totally annihilated. Abrahah himself managed to escape with his elephant and returned to his capital only to die shortly afterwards due to the effect of having been hit by the *sijjîl* stone. This memorable and miraculous event took place in the very year in which the Prophet was born (570-571 A.C.); and it is graphically described in *sûrah* 105 (*al-Fîl*) of the Qur'ân.[2]

* * *

It would be clear from the above brief survey that Makka was a settlement at least two and a half millenia old when the Prophet was born and its civic life resembled more or less that of the ancient Greek city-state. Since the beginning of its existence its inhabitants lived mainly on trade and commerce. Neither Banû Jurhum and the descendants of Ismâ'îl, the original settlers, nor the succeeding settlers were nomads when they first took possession of Makka. Even the Quraysh, before their capture of it, were no nomads but were settled at neighbouring areas and carried on trade and commerce. It was Makka's religio-commercial importance due to the existence of the Ka'ba in it and its situation on the then international trade route that made it a bone of contention between the various tribes who srtove to possess and control it. For, it was otherwise only a barren and hilly tract without any agricultural prospects or other economic attractions. At all events, it would be a mistake to suppose that Makka, and for that matter the Quraysh, had emerged only lately from a nomadic to a settled and mercantile economy shortly before or on the eve of the rise of Islam.

In fact since the emergence of Arabia into the light of history its demography has been charactlerized by a duality. We find the existence of settled

1. *Ibid.*, 48-52.

2. *Ibid.*, 49-52. The other references in the Qur'ân to *sijjîl* stones having been rained down upon a sinful people are in 11:82 and 15:74, both of which relate to the punishment of the people of Prophet Lûṭ (p.b.h.).

and relatively civilized communities (*ḥaḍar*) side by side with "nomadic" and wandering groups (*badw*). Not to speak of such ancient and well-known states as the Minaean (1200 B.C.- 600 B.C.), the Sabaean (950 B.C.-115 B.C.), the Qaṭabân (100 B.C.-115 A.C.), the Ḥaḍramaut (180 B.C.-300 A.C.) and the Himyarite (115-525 A.C.) kingdoms in the south, and the Nabataean (400 B.C.-106 A.C.), The Ghassânid (271-630 A.C.) and the Lakhmid (271-628 A.C.) states in the north, many important tribes were settled folks possessing and controlling specific territories, and having their capitals and fortresses. Of such tribes mention may be made of Banû Quḍâ'ah (north-western Arabia), Banû Kalb (northern Arabia), Banû Rabî'ah and Banû Bakr ibn Wâ'il (northeastern Arabia), Banû Ṭayy' (north-central Arabia), Banû Ḥanîfah (eastern Arabia, Al-Yamâmah), Bannû Kindah (central Arabia), Banû Hawâzin and Banû Sulaym (central and south-central Arabia), Banû Khuzâ'ah and Banû Ghifâr (western Arabia between Makka and Madina). The rulers of Banû Kindah, as already mentioned, bore the title of "King". Banû Bakr ibn Wâ'il sometimes measured strength with the Persian empire. Banû Ḥanîfah, as is well known, offered the toughest resistance to Islam after the Prophet's death. There were other settled tribes like the 'Aws and the Khazraj at Yathrib (Madina), Banû Thaqîf at Ṭâ'if, Banû 'Abs in north Arabia, Banû Kinânah in western Arabia, Banû Ghaṭafân in north Arabia and Banû al-Daws in south Arabia. Prior to his migration to Madina the Prophet had sought help and support from such settled and strongly entrenched tribes,[1] and not really from the nomadic and wandering tribes. Ṭufayl ibn 'Amr of al-Daws tribe had indeed asked the Prophet, when his position at Makka became critical, to leave it and to take shelter in the strong fortress of that tribe.[2] The Prophet, however, declined to do so. Places like Makka, Jedda, Ṭâ'if, Yathrib (Madina), Khaybar, Taymâ', Tabûk, Fadak, Dumat al-Jandal, etc., were all long-standing settlements prior to the rise of Islam. The political spectacle of pre-Islamic Arabia resembled in a large measure that of ancient India — a multiplicity of small and petty states and political entities, with the difference that in Arabia, besides the tribal settlements and jurisdictions, there were vast areas of "no man's lands" where the nomadic tribes found full play for pasture, preying on or trading with one another and, above all, for wandering from place to place in quest of the above mentioned

1. See *infra*, ch. XXXV.
2. *Infra*, Ch. XXXV, sec.II.

objectives.

The social system in respect of both the settled and nomadic sections of the population was based on 'tribe'. A considerably large group of people tracing their descent from a common and distant ancestor constituted a tribe. It was naturally composed of a number of 'clans', each clan being a group of closely related families having a common ancestor. The tribe and clan entities and distinctions were scrupulously maintained. One incidence of this system was the emphasis on the preservation of tribal, clan and family genealogies. It was not uncommon even for an ordinary individual to remember his genealogy up to the 20th or 25th of his ancestors. A respectable person was expected to tell his name by mentioning five to ten of his ancestors, such as 'Abd Allah, son of...., son of...., etc.[1] The importance attached to genealogy led to the rise of a class of specialists called *nussâb* who collected, preserved and transmitted the genealogies of tribes, clans and families. 'Abû Bakr (r.a) was one such *nussâb* at Makka. The tribe, clan and family were patriarchal, though there are a very few references to matrilineal families.

The tribe occupied the position of a "state" in modern times. An individual's identity, his rights and duties and, above all, his safety and security, were all linked with the tribe. A person disowned by or expelled from his tribe or clan was like a "stateless person". He could be wronged, captured or killed with impunity by anyone. Conversely, a wrong done to an individual was invariably treated as an offence to his tribe or clan as a whole; and if the offender belonged to another tribe or clan, that tribe or clan was collectively held responsible for the offence. Often the killing of one person by a person of another tribe led to prolonged "blood feuds" between the two tribes and their allies. An individual's qualities and attainments were counted as points of honour for his tribe or clan, while the clan's or tribe's achievements were reflected into the status and prestige of the individual. An outsider could be integrated into a tribe or clan as an ally (*ḥalîf*) or as a protected person (*mawlâ*). The tribe was, however, in no way "totalitarian"; nor were its members merely a collection of "labour" or "man-power". Just as the 'clan' and its constituents, the 'families', had individual existence, so a person enjoyed a good deal of freedom and individualism. He owned, bequeathed and succeeded to properties, married and established his own family, acted according to his own likes and dislikes so long as his acts did not infringe

1. The practice continued even after the establishment of Islam.

the rights of others, and freely pursued his own vocation or profession. Just as, for instance, the winning of a gold medal in modern olympics by an individual is considered a distinction for himself as well for his state or nation, similarly an individual's attainments, physical or intellectual, constituted laurels for himself as well as for his clan or tribe. Similarly, just as a modern citizen is duty-bound to defend and fight for his state or nation, so a member of a tribe was duty-bound to defend and fight for his tribe or clan. Even then, if he so elected, he could at times remain neutral and avoid joining his tribe's war. 'Abd Allah ibn 'Ubayy's not joining his tribe in the Bu'âth war between the Aws and the Khazraj of Madina is an instance in point.

Leadership of the tribe was determined on the basis of nobility in birth, seniority in age, wisdom and personal qualities. The tribal leader, however, was no despot. Affairs of the tribe generally, and questions of war and peace particularly, were decided in consultation with the clan chiefs. Similarly, civic and administrative functions were distributed among the various clans of a tribe.

Within the tribe and outside it an individual's stature was gauged by the extent of his *murû'ah*, which term bore almost the same signification as that of 'chivalry' in medieval Europe. Generally, *murû'ah* found expression through bravery in battle, hospitality even in poverty, fidelity even at the risk of one's life and eloquence. A person who excelled in all these qualities was called *Kâmil* or Perfect. Suwayd ibn Ṣâmit of Banû 'Awf at Madina was one such *Kâmil*.[1] Eloquence found expression through poetry. A poet was held in esteem by his tribe and was in a sense its spokesman. Through his poetry the poet usually idealized and glorified his tribe and clan, sung their victories, expressed their joy and gave vent to their sorrows, ethos and attitudes in happiness and adversity. The tribal poets used to meet in rivalry and recited their choicest productions at the fair of 'Ukâẓ. The Arabs were connoisseures of poetry. The best compositions were awarded appropriate prizes and the very distinctive ones are said to have been written in golden letters and hung on the Ka'ba walls. These were as such called *mu'allaqât* or the "Suspended ones". The Ka'ba was thus not only a common religious centre for the Arabs, it was a point of their intellectual and literary integration as well. During the couple of centuries before the rise of Islam, the composi-

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 425-426.

tions of only ten poets found place in the *mu'allaqât*.[1]

As in the case of the existence of small and petty states in any given country in ancient times, so in Arabia, the tribes were often at war with one another. Tribal pride, personal rivalries, the desire of one tribe to aggrandize at the cost of another tribe, blood feuds, quarrels over the possession of oases, wells, pastures and fertile lands and, at times, diplomacy and machinations by the neighbouring Byzantine and Persian empires for their respective imperial interests generally lay at the root of such internecine wars. The Arabs cherished the memory of the most important conflicts as the "Days" of their glory and bravery—*'Ayyâm al-'Arab*. Of such memorable "Days" mention may be made of the "Day of Basûs" between Banû Taghlib and Banû Bakr, the "Days of Dâḥis and al-Ghabrâ'" between Banû 'Abs and Banû Dhubyân (both in the late fifth century A.C.), the "Days of Fijâr" between the Quraysh and Banû Kinânah on the one hand and Banû Hawâzin on the other (late sixth century[2]), the "Day of Dhû Qâr" between Banû Bakr ibn Wâ'il and the Persian empire (610 A.C.) and the "Day of Bu'âth" between the 'Aws and the Khazraj of Madina (617-618 A.C.).[3] Such wars were fought more with a view to establishing the superiority and heroism of the one party over its opponent than for exterminating the latter. Often not much actual blood was shed, though the conflict and hostilities might be prolonged over years or generations. Sometimes peace was concluded by the one combatant tribe paying its opponent blood-money for the surplus of its dead.

In line with the two-fold divisions of the population their economic life generally followed two distinct patterns. The settled people carried on trade

1. These poets were: (1) Ṭarafa ibn al-'Abd of Banû Bakr (d. 500 A.C.), (2) Imru' al-Qays, grandson of King Ḥârith of Banû Kindah (d. 540 A.C.), (3) 'Ubayd ibn al-Abraṣ (d. 555 A.C.), (4) Al-Ḥârith ibn Ḥilliza of Banû Bakr (d. 580 A.C.), (5) 'Amr ibn Kulthûm of Banû Taghlib (d. 600 A.C.), (6) Al-Nâbighah al-Dhubyânî of Banû Dhubyân (d. 604 A.C.), (7) 'Antara ibn al-Shaddâd of Banû 'Abs (d. 615 A.C), (8) Zuhayr ibn 'Abî Sulma of Banû Muzayna (d. 615 A.C.), (9) Al-'A'sha (Maymûn ibn Qays, d. 629 A.C.) and (10) Labîd ibn Rabî'ah of Banû 'Âmir ibn Ṣa'ṣa'ah (d. 662 A.C.) The last named embraced Islam and gave up poetry. See for a short discussion on them R.A. Nocholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, Cambridge, 1988 edn., pp. 103-125.

2. See *infra*, Ch.VII, sec.III.

3. See *infra*, Ch.XXXV, sec.III. One of the best modern consolidated accounts of most of these *'ayyâm* is Muḥammad Aḥmad Jâd al-Mawlâ Bik and others, *'Ayyâm al-'Arab Fî al-Jâhiliyyah*, Cairo, n.d.

and commerce and also engaged themselves in agriculture, specially those in fertile spots like Ṭâ'if and Madina. The nomadic tribes, on the other hand, lived mainly on the rearing of the sheep, the goat and the camel, for which purpose they moved from place to place in search of pastures and water. This distinction is, however, true only to a certain extent. Settled peoples like those at Makka and Ṭâ'if also engaged themselves in sheep and camel breeding; while the nomadic tribes similarly participated in both the internal and external trade of the land. In fact they depended for much of the necessaries of life on the traders of the settlements. Also the nomadic tribes themselves carried their wares, both their own products as well as imported goods, from place to place, particularly to the annual fairs. Conversely, the traders of the settlements depended on the cooperation of the nomadic tribes for the safe passage of the trade caravans through their respective jurisdictions. Hâshim ibn 'Abd Manâf, who concluded a series of trade treaties with the Byzantine and Abyssinian authorities, also concluded a series of agreements with a number of the nomadic tribes for the same purpose.[1] Even the sending of trade caravans from distant places to the fairs like that at 'Ukâẓ needed the "guarantee" of some influential local individual. The rivalry of two such local men for standing surety for a caravan from Ḥîra to the 'Ukâẓ fair lay at the root of the last Fijâr war.[2] Makka, by virtue of its being also a religious and inviolate place, was a sort of "free market" where merchants from distant lands used to come without the need for such formal guarantee. Still, the spoliation of a Yamani trader by a Makkan leader, Al-'Âṣ ibn Wâ'il of Banû Sahm, led to the formation of the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl*[3] in order to prevent the recurrence of such events.

In fact the paucity of Arabia's agricultural products and its climatic conditions on the one hand, and its geographical situation in relation to the outer world, on the other, turned its inhabitants into natural traders. It is well-known how, since antiquity, its inhabitants acted as middlemen of the trade between the east and the west and carried on both overland and sea-borne commerce with Asia, Africa and Europe. In the first century A.C. the Arabs were of course displaced by the Romans in the domain of the maritime trade in the Mediterranean and the Red Sea; but they retained control of the over-

1. Ibn Sa'd I, 78.
2. *Infra*, Ch.VII, sec.III.
3. *Infra*, Ch.VII. sec.IV.

land carrying trade from Asia and Africa to the Byzantine and the Persian empires and vice-versa.

Makka, besides being a religious and intellectual centre of the Arabs thrived as a commercial centre too. The sources make it amply clear that before the rise of Islam the Makkan leaders were all big businessmen and merchants leading their trade caravans to Yaman and Abyssinia in the south and Syria and Ḥîra-Persia in the north. The Prophet himself, before his call to Prophethood, carried on trade and commerce. The fact of his leading Khadîjah's (r.a.) trade caravan to Syria when he was about twenty-five years old is well-known. Makka consisted of several big markets in accordance with the country of origin of the goods available there. For instance, there was a *Dâr Miṣr* or Egyptian market where wares from Egypt were stocked and distributed.[1]

In pre-Islamic Arabia commerce went hand in hand with religion. The annual pilgrimage to the Ka'ba and Makka provided an occasion for the Arabs to throng there with their wares and products, to participate in a sort of national féte and to conduct business in no small scale. The four holy months were utilized for the same purpose and for holding the great annual fairs at 'Ukâẓ, Majannah and Dhû al-Majâz. The first named fair continued for twenty days and was attended with great socio-intellectual festivities and exhibition and exchange of wares and products. Trade caravans from distant places used to come to that fair. As will be seen presently, besides the Ka'ba at Makka, the Arabs had established a number of subsidiary shrines around different idols at other places, such as the shrine of Al-Lât at Ṭâ'if, the shrine of Al-'Uzzâ at Nakhla and that of Manât at Qudayd. These places also grew as religious and commercial centres and were visited by the tribes for religious and commercial purposes at appropriate seasons. As among the Jews so among the pre-Islamic Arabs usury was in vogue. There are instances of the Makkan and the Ṭâ'ifian leaders' lending and borrowing money at interest. Islam abolished usury and directed the Muslims of the time to give up what was due as interest on their capital.[2]

The chief articles of food consisted of the flesh of camel, goat and sheep, milk of all these three animals and, above all, dates. Milk and dates were the usual diet. Dates were (and still are) produced in abundance in different parts

1. Al-Azrakî, II, 263.
2. Q. 2:275-279; 3:130; 30:39.

of the peninsula, some one hundred varieties being produced around Madina alone. Other agricultural products included wheat, barley, millet at some places, the frankincense tree in Yaman, gum-arabic in the 'Asîr region, and grapes, pomegranates, apples, apricots and melons at fertile spots like Ṭâ'if. The Prophet, when returning from his mission to Ṭâ'if, rested in a vine-yard in its outskirt belonging to two Makkan leaders, 'Utbah and Shaybah, sons of Rabî'ah.[1] Some rice was produced in Oman and Al-Ḥasa. The English word "rice" is in fact a corruption of the Arabic *ruzz*. The Qur'ân refers to the pre-Islamic Arabs' practice of earmarking a portion of their expected crops and cattle (*al-ḥarth wa al-'an'âm*) for their gods and another (usually a very negligible one) for Allah.[2] Of the domestic animals, besides the camel, the goat and the sheep, special mention should be made of the horse. The Arabian horse was (and still is) noted for its pure breed and high quality. The camel was, however, the most important and the most useful animal. Besides providing the Arab with meat and milk for his food, hide for his coverings and tents, it was his chief vehicle for transportation through the inhospitable desert. It is so created that it can go through the desert for about twenty-five days in winter and about five days in summer without taking water. Its bodily construction is also designed to withstand simoons and sand-stroms. The Qur'ân draws attention to this remarkable creation of Allah's, along with His other remarkable creations[3] The Arab's wealth was counted in terms of the number of camels he owned. The dowry of a bride was fixed, the price of blood was paid and many other transactions were carried out in terms of camels, although coins (*dînâr*, *dirham*) were not unknown and were in fact very much used in trade and financial transactions. The Arabic language contains about a thousand terms for camels of various breeds and age.

IV. THE SOCIO-RELIGIOUS CONDITION: *JÂHILIYYAH*

The dual nature of the population and the dual aspects (agricultural and commercial) of their economic life seem to be matched by a dualism in the Arabs' religious beliefs and practices prior to the rise of Islam. The core of their religious beliefs and practices was characterized by unmistakable traces of the Abrahamic tradition. No other people of the time or subsequently so

1. See *Infra,* Ch. XXXV, sec.I.
2. Q. 6:136.
3. Q. 88:17.

well remembered the Abrahamic tradition and so closely performed the Abrahamic rites as did the Arabs. Yet, at the same time, they had succumbed to polytheism and idolatry with all its concomitant usages and superstitions.

For a long time indeed the descendents of Ismâ'îl continued to follow the faith and rites in their original forms as introduced by him and his father. With the passage of centuries, however, they gradually deviated from the original faith and succumbed to the natural tendency of the crude and unsophisticated mind to find an easily approachable god for support in times of distress and for redress of wrong, to the tendency to idialize a hero or ancestor, to the sense of helplessness in the face of the forces of nature and, above all, to the influence of the practice of those who were regarded as superior, intellectually, physically or materially. The "civilised" peoples who surrounded the Arabs in the past as well as contemporaneously were all engrossed in polytheism in some form or other. Wherever the pre-Islamic Arabs turned, as Ismâ'îl R. al Fârûqî states, they "saw the transcendence of God violated. Those Arabs who inclined in that direction became bolder by the example of their neighbours. It was their Byzantine Christian neighbours who sold them the human statues of the Ka'bah."[1]

Polytheism was introduced at Makka after its occupation by Banû Khuzâ'ah, particularly by their leader 'Amr ibn Luḥayy.[2] According to Ibn Hishâm 'Amr once went to Syria where he observed the people worshipping idols. He enquired of them of the reasons for their doing so and they replied that they did so because those idols caused the rains to fall for them and victory to attend them as they prayed to the idols for these things. 'Amr was impressed and asked them whether they would give him one for his people to worship it. Accordingly they gave him the idol of Hubal which he brought to Makka, placed it near the Ka'ba and asked his people to worship it. As they considered him their leader and wise man they started worshipping the idol.[3]

1. Ismâ'îl R. al-Fârûqî and Lois Lamyâ' al-Fârûqî, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*, New York, 1986, p. 63.

2. *Bukhârî*, nos., 3521, 4623-4624; *Muslim*, no. 2856; *Musnad*, II, 275-276; III, 318, 353, 374; V, 137.

3. Ibn Hishâm, I, 77. According to Ibn al-Kalbî, 'Amr once fell seriously ill and was told by someone that if he took bath in a special spring in Syria he would be cured. So he went there, took bath in that spring and was cured. As he observed the people there worshipping =

The story illustrates the fact that polytheism found its way among the descendants of Ismâ'îl from their neighbours and others. A modern scholar, giving support to the story, states that even the Arabic word for idol, *ṣanam*, "is clearly an adaptation of Aramaic *ṣĕlĕm*."[1]

According to another report 'Amr ibn Luḥayy introduced also the worship of the images of *Wadd*, *Suwâ'*, *Yaghûth*, *Ya'ûq* and *Nasr*, the gods of Prophet Nûḥ's unbelieving people. It is said that a *jinni* informed 'Amr that the images of those gods were to be found at a certain place at Jedda and asked him to bring them from thence and to worship them. Accordingly, he went to Jedda, found the images at the place indicated, brought them to Makka and asked the people to start worshipping them.[2] These gods were indeed worshipped by Prophet Nûḥ's people, as the Qur'ân clearly states.[3] They represented certain cults relating to astral worship or worship of the forces of nature or deification of some human qualities, prevalent in ancient Assyria and Babylonia, the land of Nûḥ's people.[4] A report attributed to Ibn 'Abbâs (r.a.) says that these names were originally borne by some prominent persons among the people of Nûḥ who subsequently idealized and idolized them.[5] Once again, these reports emphasize, on the one hand, how the descendants of Ismâ'îl gradually succumbed to the polytheism of their predecessors and others and, on the other, the role of 'Amr ibn Luḥayy in the process.

Once introduced, however, polytheism spread among the Arabs in various shapes and forms. Ibn Isḥâq gives an explanation of the spread of stone worship thus. He says that when the descendants of Ismâ'îl were for various reasons obliged to disperse from Makka, each group, as they left it, took with them a stone from the sacred precincts as souvenir and memento of the Ka'ba. They placed those stones at suitable spots in their new domiciles, circumambulated them as they used to circumambulate the Ka'ba and treated

= idols he asked them the reason for their doing so, etc. Ibn al-Kalbî, *Kitâb al-Aṣnâm*, ed. Aḥmad Zakî Pâshâ, Cairo, 1343 / 1924, p. 8.

1. P.K. Hitti, *A History of the Arabs*, 1986 reprint, p. 100 and n.2
2. Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-Bârî*, VI, 634.
3. Q. 71:23.
4. See for a discussion the *First Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1913-1936, I, 379-380; A. Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'ân Text Translation and Commentary*, Islamic Foundation, Leicester, 1975, pp. 1619-1623 (Appendix XIII to *Sûrah* 71).
5. *Bukhârî*, no. 4920.

them with various marks of reverence. Gradually their succeeding generations began to worship not only those stones but any stone that especially impressed them. Thus they forgot the original Abrahamic religion and degenerated into stone and image worship.[1]

Ultimately each and every tribe and clan, in fact every family, had their special idol to worship. On the eve of the Prophet's emergence some 360 idols were placed in and around the Ka'ba. The most important of these was Hubal. It was a big statue in human form of which a hand having been broken the Quraysh had it remade with gold. Two of the idols in the Ka'ba compound were 'Isâf and Nâ'ila, placed originally on the spot of the Zamzam well but subsequently removed to a spot near the hills of Ṣafâ and Marwah. According to pre-Islamic belief, 'Isâf and Nâ'ila were originally a man and a woman of Banû Jurhum who were turned into stones on account of their having desecrated the sacred precincts by making love in there.[2]

Besides thus making the Ka'ba the principal dormitory of their numerous idols the Arabs had developed a number of subsidiary Ka'bas *(ṭawâghît)*, so to say, at different places in the land, each with its presiding god or goddess. They used to visit those shrines at appointed times, circumambulate them and make sacrifices of animals there, besides performing other polytheistic rites. The most prominent of these shrines were those of *Al-Lât* at Ṭâ'if *Al-'Uzzâ* at Nakhlah and *Manât* near Qudayd. The origins of these idols are uncertain. Ibn al-Kalbî says that Al-Lât was "younger" (*'aḥdath*) than Manât, while Al-'Uzzâ was "younger" than both al-Lât and Manât.[3] But though Al-'Uzzâ was thus the youngest of the three, it was nonetheless the most important and the greatest (*'a'ẓam*) idol with the Quraysh who, along with Banû Kinânah ministered to it.[4] The Qur'ân specifically mentions these three goddesses of the Arabs.[5] Some of the other semi-or demi-Ka'bas were those of *Dhû al-Khalṣah* at Tabâlah (about "seven nights' journey" from Makka), of *Fils* at a place between the Ṭayy' Mountains, the *Ri'âm* at Ṣan'â' in Yaman, the *Ruḍâ'* in the territory of Banû Rabî'ah ibn Kâ'b, a group of

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 77.
2. Ibn Hishâm, I, 82. Ibn al-Kalbî, *op.cit.*, 9, 29.
3. Ibn al-Kalbî, op.cit., 16, 17. The writer in the *First Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Vol. I, 380) supposes that Arabia's Al-Lât was the origin of the Greek goddess Leto, mother of the Sun-god Apollo.
4. Ibn Hishâm, I, 83; Ibn al-Kalbî, *op.cit.*, 18.
5. Q. 53:19-20.

Ka'bas (*Dhû al-Ka'abât*) at Sindâd in the land of Banû Bakr and Banû Taghlib and the Ka'ba of Banû al-Ḥârith at Najran.[1]

In addition to these subsidiary Ka'bas there were a number of other shrines of specific idols scattered throughout the peninsula. Of these mention may be made of the shrine of *Suwâ'* at Ruhâṭ (Yanbu'), that of *Wadd* at Dumat al-Jandal, that of *Yaghûth* at Jurash (in the Banû Ṭayy' territory), that of *Ya'ûq* at Hamdan in Yaman ("two nights" from Ṣan'â' in the north), that of *Nasr* in the land of Ḥimyar (Balkha') in Yaman, that of *'Umyânis* or *'Amm 'Anas* at Khawlân and that of *Sa'd* at Tanûfa.[2]

The pre-Islamic Arabs used to worship these idols or gods and goddesses in various ways. They used to make supplication to them, prostrated themselves before them, made offerings to them, beseeched their favour, sought to please or propitiate them in the belief that they were capable of doing good or harm to man, sacrificed animals on altars dedicated to them, made pilgrimages to their shrines, circumambulated them and drew arrows of divination by them or in their shrines. They also used to name themselves after these gods and goddesses, such as 'Abd Yaghûth, 'Abd al-'Uzzâ, etc. But though thus engrossed in extensive polytheism and idol-worship the pre-Islamic Arabs did not develop any elaborate mythology or involved theology around their gods and goddesses as did the ancient Greeks and the Hindus. No trace of such things can be found in the pre-Islamic poetry and traditions. This fact further indicates that polytheism and idol worship were not indigenous to the Isma'ilite Arabs but were grafted on to the Abrahamic tradition.

Nothing illustrates this fact better than the existence of unmistakable traces of the Abrahamic faith in the medley of polytheistic beliefs and practices. Of these the most remarkable was the existence of a belief in Allah as the Supreme God,[3] coupled with the belief in the existence of angels and *jinn*. At times of extreme peril the pre-Islamic Arabs even directly invoked Allah's mercy and succour.[4] Sometimes they used to swear by Allah,[5] besides frequently naming themselves 'Abd Allah. The recent discovery of a number of inscriptions, particularly in northern Arabia, containing the name

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 83-89; Ibn Kalbî, *op.cit.*, 30, 44-47.
2. Ibn Hishâm, I, 78-83.
3. Q. 23:84-89; 31:25.
4. Q. 10:22; 31:32.
5. Q. 6:109.

of Allah,[1] which inscriptions are all post-Abrahamic, is a decisive proof of the prevalence of the notion of Allah among the Arabs since distant antiquity.[2] Other residue of the Abrahamic tradition was their universal reverence to the Ka'ba at Makka, their circumambulation of it, their making of lesser pilgrimage (*'umrah*) and the pilgrimage (*ḥajj*) to it, their performance of such Abrahamic rites in connection with the pilgrimage as the standing at *'Arafat*, the halt at Muzdalifa, the stay at Minâ, the sacrificing of animals on the occasion, their making seven runs between the Ṣafâ and the Marwah hills and their shaving of their heads. Some other remnants of the Abrahamic rites were their universally practising circumcision and their fasting on the day of 'Âshûrâ'.[3]

The coexistence of the Abrahamic tradition with the polytheistic beliefs and practices over long centuries did not however lead to the growth of any syncretic system of belief. The total picture that emerges is merely that of an ill-assorted amalgam with a number of peculiar by-products of that amalgam. One such by-product was the pre-Islamic Arabs' notion that their worshipping of the gods and goddesses would take them nearer to Allah;[4] that those gods and goddesses were their intercessors with Him;[5] and that some of their goddesses, the angels and even the *jinn* were Allah's daughters![6] Another outgrowth of the amalgam was their foolish practice of setting apart a portion (usually a major portion) of their crops and cattle for their gods and goddesses, and another portion (usually a minor portion) for Allah.[7] Other instances were their mixing up polytheistic clauses in the formula of "Response" (*talbiyah*) while performing the circumambulation of the Ka'ba,[8] the Makkans' not going upto 'Arafat at the time of *ḥajj* but only

1. See for instance F.V. Winnet, "Allah Before Islam", *M.W.*, XXVIII (1938), 239-248.

2. P.K. Hitti, after referring to the inscriptions, to some of the relevant Qur'ânic passages and to the existence of the name 'Abd Allah among the Quraysh, states that "evidently" Allah was "the tribal deity of the Quraysh." (Hitti, *op.cit.*, 101). The remark is both misleading and untenable. Neither did the inscriptions he cites belong to the Quraysh nor was the name 'Abd Allah exclusive to them. Not to speak of many others outside the Quraysh circle, the leader of the "Hypocrites" at Madina was 'Abd Allah ibn Ubayy!

3. *Bukhari*, no. 3831.

4. Q. 39:3 = ﴿... ما نعبدهم إلا ليقربونا إلى الله زلفى...﴾

5. 10:18 = ﴿... ويقولون هـٰؤلاء شفعـٰؤنا عند الله...﴾

6. 16:57 = ﴿ويجعلون لله البنـٰت...﴾ See also 37:149-154; 43:16; 52:39.

7. Q. 6:136.

8. Ibn Hishâm, I, 78.

upto Muzdalifa on account of a notion of their religious superiority and of their being the inhabitants of the sacred territory, their generally not allowing anyone to circumambulate the Ka'ba except in garments provided by them (*ḥums*) and their even circumambulating it in a naked state. With reference to such mingling of polytheistic beliefs and practices with a recognition of Allah as Supreme Lord the Qur'ân declares: "And most of them believe not in Allah without associating (others as partners) with Him."[1]

The Arabs' polytheism and worship of idols together with their mistaken notions about Allah determined their whole attitude to life and society. They considered life in this world to be the be-all and end-all of human existence. They worshipped and propitiated the gods and goddesses and recognized Allah for that purpose alone. They did not believe in resurrection, reward and punishment and life after death. "There is nothing but our life in this world; we shall die and live but shall never be raised up again", so they believed and declared.[2] This attitude led to a sense of ultimate unaccountability and a desire to enjoy the worldly life in all possible ways and without any restrictions. Licentiousness, prostitution, adultery, fornication and unbridled indulgence in wine, women and gambling were thus widely prevalent.[3] Unlimited polygamy was in vogue and a sort of polyandry, in which a particular woman was used as wife by a number of men (less than 10) was not uncommon. If a child was born in such a case, it was to be accepted by the person whom the woman declared to be its father.[4] Sometimes a person allowed his wife to go to other persons for the sake of having a son.[5]

The woman's position in society was indeed unenviable, though she participated in many a social and economic activity and though we sometimes find glowing tributes paid to sweethearts in pre-Islamic poetry. In general, women were treated as chattels. There was no limit to a man's

1. Q. 12:106 = ﴿وما يؤمن أكثرهم بالله إلا وهم مشركون﴾

2. Q. 23:37 = ﴿إن هى إلا حياتنا الدنيا نموت ونحيا وما نحن بمبعوثين﴾ There are indeed many passages in the Qur'ân which refer to this notion of the unbelievers. See for instance, 6:29; 17:49; 17:98; 23:35; 23:82; 37:16; 37:53; 37:58-59; 44:35; 50:3; 56:47 and 64:7. Similarly the Qur'ân is replete with passages to bring home the theme of resurrection and the Day of Judgement.

3. The Qur'ân condemned and prohibited these practices. See 5:3; 5:90; 17:23; 24:2-3; 25:68 and 60:12.

4. *Bukhârî*, no. 5127.

5. *Ibid.*

taking as many wives as he liked. Similarly he divorced his wives at will and quite frequently. There was no rule of prohibition; so a man could and did marry irrespective of blood-relationship. Often two sisters were joined as wives to a man at the same time. Sons married their father's ex-wives or widows (not mothers). There was no recognized rule for a woman to inherit from her ancestors or husband. Birth of a daughter was regarded as inauspicious and disliked.[1] Most inhuman was that many Arabs, out of a false sense of honour and for fear of poverty buried alive their young daughters.[2] On the eve of the rise of Islam this barbarous practice seems to have somewhat waned in and around Makka; but it was quite widespread in other parts of Arabia. The Qur'ân speaks of its having been the practice with "many polytheists" ﴿لكثير من المشركين﴾.[3] Qays ibn 'Âṣim of Banû Tamîm, who embraced Islam in 9 H., confessed that he had previously buried alive as many as 8 or 12 of his daughters.[4]

The sense of unaccountabilty also lay at the root of frequent killing of human beings without any qualms of conscience or remorse, and of stealing, plundering and spoliating others of their properties and possessions. The only check to such acts was tribal vengeance and retaliation. A number of superstititions and unconscionable practices also were prevalent among them. They believed in the utterances of soothsayers and astrologers and often decided upon a course of action, for instance a marriage or a journey, by means of divination by drawing or shooting arrows in a specified manner or near specific idols. Gambling and raffling were extensively in use. They even decided their respective shares in a particular thing, for instance the meat of a slaughtered animal, by casting lots with arrows. The meat was divided into unequal and preferential shares, these were indicated on arrows and these were then drawn, like the drawing of modern lottery tickets. Another peculiar practice was *ḥabal al-ḥabala*, or the selling of a pregnant camel on condition that the price was to be paid when she gave birth to a she-camel and that she-camel herself became pregnant.[5] Another super-

1. Q. 16:58-59.
2. Q. 6:137; 6:151.
3. Q. 6:137.
4. Al-Numayrî (al-Baṣrî), 'Abû Zayd 'Umar ibn Shabbah (173-262 H.), *Târîkh al-Madînat al-Munawwarah*, ed. F.M. Shaltut, Part II, second print, Madina, n.d., p. 532; *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, IV, 220; *Al-'Iṣâbah*, III, 253 (No. 7194). See also Al-Dârimî, I, Introduction, 3-4.
5. *Bukhârî*, no. 3843. The Prophet prohibited such dealings.

stitious and polytheistic practice was the tabooing of certan camels, goats or oxen, calling them *al-sâ'ibah*, *al-baḥîrah*, *al-waṣîlah* and *al-ḥâmî*. A she-camel consecutively giving birth to ten female calves without the intervention of any male calf was tabooed and was named *al-sâ'ibah*. She was not to be used for riding or carrying any load, her hair was not to be trimmed and her milk was not to be drunk except by a guest. If she subsequently gave birth to another female, that "daughter" of hers was called *al-baḥîrah* and was similarly tabooed. A she-goat similarly giving birth consecutively to ten females in five conceptions was likewise tabooed and called *al-waṣîlah*. A bull fathering consecutively ten female calves was also tabooed and called *al-ḥâmî*.[1] The Qur'ân condemned such practices.[2] These practices and beliefs of the Arabs, particularly their polytheism, licentiousness, adultery, gambling, stealing, plundering, their burying alive of young daughters, their tribal spirit and excitability (*ḥamiyyah*), etc., were collectively referred to in the Qur'ân and the traditions as *jâhiliyyah*.[3]

While this was the general socio-religious scene, other religious systems like Christianity, Judaism, Mazdaism (Zoroastrianism) and Sabaism (or Sabianism) had made their way into the peninsula in a limited way. Christianity was introduced in some northern tribes, particularly among the Ghassanids and in Ḥîra mainly at the instance and initiative of the Byzantine authorities. Some princes of Ḥîra had embraced it. In the south it was introduced in Yaman mainly after the first Abyssinain occupation of that land (340-378 A.C.). In its neighbouring region of Najran Christianity of the Monophysite type was introduced by a missionary from Syria named Faymiyûn.[4] A number of people of the area embraced that faith. There was also a sprinkling of Christian immigrants and converts at Makka at the time of the Prophet's rise.

So far as Judaism was concerned it found its place in the peninsula not so much by conversion as by immigration of the Jews into it. This immigration took place mainly at two periods — one after the Babylonian occupation of Palestine in 587 B.C., and for a second time after the Roman conquest of the land and the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in 70 A.C. A number of

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 89.
2. Q. 5:103; 6:139.
3. Q. 3:154; 5:50; 33:33; 48:26 and *Bukhârî*, no. 3524.
4. Ibn Hishâm, I, 31-34.

Jewish tribes migrated into Arabia and were setteld at places like Yathrib (Madina), Khaybar, Taymâ' and Fadak. Not that they remained completely inactive in the matter of propagation of their faith. According to tradition they made a convert of the Himyarite king (Tubba') Abû Karîb As'ad Kâmil (385-420 A.C) when he visited Madina in the course of a northern expedition and sent with him two rabbis to propagate Judaism in Yaman.[1] The extent of the success of these Jewish missionaries in Yaman is not clear; but a descendant of As'ad Kâmil's, Dhû Nuwâs, proved to be a vigorous champion of Judaism. He persecuted the Christians not only of Yaman but even massacred the Christian community of Najran, throwing a large number of them in a deep ditch full of fire.[2] His intolerance brought about a joint Byzantine-Abyssinian intervention in Yaman leading to the end of Dhû Nuwâs's rule and the beginning of the second Abyssinian occupation of the land under Abrahah. As noted earlier, Abrahah determined to Christianize the whole land, built a gigantic cathedral at Ṣan'â' and led a campaign against Makka in 570-71 A.C. to destroy the Ka'ba.

Mazdaism or Zoroastrianism, which prevailed in Persia, found some converts in the eastern coastal region and Bahrayn. Some persons in Yaman also embraced it after the Persian occupation of the land in 525 A.C. Sabianism or Sabaism, to which the Qur'ân makes reference,[3] probably represented an ancient faith of either Babylonian or south Arabian origin consisting of astral worship. Its votaries were very few at the time of the rise of islam. At any rate, it was considered a foreign religion; for whenever a person abandoned his ancestral faith the Arabs used to say that he had turned a Sabian.[4]

All these religions, however, had very little effect upon the life and society of the Arabs in general. Particularly Christianity and Judaism had compromised their positions by their conflicts and intolerance of each other, by their internal dissensions and by their deviation from the original teachings of Jesus and Moses (p.b.t.) To the discerning Arab Christianity, with its doctrines of incarnation and the Trinity, besides the worship of the images of Jesus and Mary, appeared little better than his worship of the idols together with a recognition of Allah as the Supreme Lord. Similarly Judaism, with its

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, pp. 26-27.
2. This incident is referred to in Q. 85:4.
3. Q. 2:62; 5:69; 22:17.
4. *Bukhârî*, no. 3523; *Musnad*, III, 492; IV, 341; Ibn Hishâm, I, 344.

exclusivity and its claim of 'Uzayr being the son of God, appeared equally polytheistic. This is highlighted by the fact that on eve of the rise of Islam a number of people came out in search of the true Abrahamic faith and went by the appellation of *ḥanîfs*.[1] Even if the emergence of these men is regarded as the outcome of an interaction between the existence of the Abrahamic tradition on the one hand and the presence of Christianity and Judaism in Arabia on the other, the fact that almost all the *ḥanîfs* turned their faces away from both these religions only illustrates their inefficacy on the mind of knowledgeable Arabs of the time.

V. THE WORLD BEYOND

Arabia was not of course the whole world; nor were the Arabs the only people steeped in *jâhiliyyah*. There were lands and peoples beyond, and *jâhiliyyah* too. The world at the time was notionally divided into three broad regions. In the west lay the Byzantine and Roman world, extending from what is now modern Iraq in the east to the Atlantic in the west (excluding Africa). To the east of this region lay its rival, the Persian empire, extending from Iraq in the west to the Indus Vallely in the east. The third region lay to the east of the Persian empire and consisted of the much coveted but little known lands of India and China. There were other lands and peoples in the far east and the far west; but they were not known. Even if known they, from what we now know of them, would not have presented a better spectacle, politically or culturally.

The world scene was dominated by the rivalry and conflicts between the Byzantine and the Persian empires, the two great powers of the time. The conflict was of old origin. It found expression in the past through conflicts between Greece and Persia (the Graeco-Persian wars). When the Roman empire succeeded to the Greek civilization, the tradition of conflict also was taken over by Rome; and when the Roman Empire in the west came to an end in 476 A.C. and the Roman Empire in the east (the Byzantine empire) was established with its capital at Constantinople, it inherited the same tradition of conflict with the Persian empire. The dissolution of the Roman Empire in the west was precipitated and accompanied by the onrush of a number of northern peoples, the Ostro-Goths (Eastern Goths), the Vissi-Goths (Western Goths), the Vikings, the Franks, the Vandals (whence *vandalism*), etc. The "civilized" Romans called these progenitors of the

1. *Infra*, Ch. XIII, sec.I.

modern German, French, Spanish and English nations "Barbarians"; and modern European historians term the history of these peoples from the fifth to the 10th century as the history of the "Dark Ages" in Europe. Needless to point out, Islam rose in Arabia when Europe was passing through the Dark Ages.

None of the three regions of the world was devoid of impressive material civilizations, however. India and China could boast of as high a degree of material civilization as could the Graeco-Roman world and Persia. Similarly Petra, Palmyra in northern Arabia, not to speak of Assyria, Babylonia, Phoenicia, south Arabia and Egypt, did not lag far behind in respect of material civilization. Indeed the Arabs shared with the other peoples the elements of material civilization as much as in trade and commerce. So did the other peoples share with the Arabs the type of beliefs, practices and habits that constitute *jâhiliyyah* in Islamic parlance.

The Two most distinctively constituent elements of *jâhiliyyah* were polytheism and idol worship, with all their superstitious beliefs and practices. These were no monopoly of the Arabs, but were prevalent more extensively among the more materially civilized peoples. While the Indus Valley civilzation shared with the Tigris-Euphrates Valley civilization the prototypes of Gilgamesh and other gods and goddesses, the Greek and Indian pantheons consisted of many counterparts of each other's gods and goddesses. The Hindus' *Varuna* is exactly the Greeks' Apollo. Just as the Greeks philosophized and idealized their idolatry through an elaborate theology and mythology, so did the ancient Hindus develop a no less involved and intricate theology and mythology.

Polytheism, idolatry and superstitions were in fact extensively entrenched in India. The *Rig-Veda*, the earliest of the four *Vedas* of the Hindus,[1] does of course contain traces of monotheism. But the Hindus had completely lost sight of it and instead deified every conceivable objects — stones, trees, rivers, the sun, the moon, the stars, mountains, princes, animals and even the reproductive organs. They installed the images of these and other gods and goddesses in various forms and shapes and worshipped them with elaborate rites and superstitious customs. In the course of time the Hindu mythology counted some 330 million gods and goddesses — a figure obviously many times more than the number of population at the time. Their devotion to

1. The other three *Vedas* are the *Sâma*, the *Yayuh* and the *Atharva*.

idolatry made them good sculptors like the ancient Greeks and Romans. While the Arabs idealized and idolized some of their prominent ancestors, the Hindus not only did so but even conceived them to be the incarnations of God. In fact it was the Hindus who first formulated the doctrine of incarnation and reincarnation of God. Râma and Krishna, among others, are to them incarnations of God born on the earth in human form. Like the Arabs the Hindus did recognize the existence of a supreme God; but they did so in the form of a Trinity of three distinct persons, *Brahma*, *Vishnu*, and *Síva*. if the Arabs tabooed some animals and prohibited their use after some specific performances on their part, the Hindus worshipped a number of animals, deified the cow and prohibited the eating of beef (not the other uses of the cattle), although the Rig-vedic Brahmans are found to relish beef to their hearts' content.[1] By the system of *caste* and untouchability Hinduism consigned the generality of their people, particularly the "lowest" order, the *Sudra*, to the deepest depth of degradation. Polygamy was in vogue and the position of women in society was no better. Adultery and fornication were common; and if the Hindus did not bury alive their young daughters, they burnt alive their widows, young or old, with their dead husbands.[2]

As a protest against the excesses of the caste system and other abuses of Hinduism Prince Siddhârtha belonging to the Sâkya tribe of Kapilâvastu (north India), better known as Gautama Buddha (566-486 B.C.) preached Buddhism which enunciated the "Eight-Fold Path" of "Right Thinking", "Right Doing", "Right Hearing", etc. He avoided discussing the intricate questions of theology and in fact remained silent even about God. Soon after his death, however, his teachings were perverted and, due to the influence of Hinduism, he himself was deified and consecrated as an incarnation of God by the Buddhists themselves who began to worship his image. By the seventh century A.C. further Brahmanical and Hindu reaction succeeded in practically expelling Buddhism from the land of its birth. While it continued to maintain a precarious existence in the peripheral regions of India, this perverted or rather idolatrous Buddhism found its way into the Far East, the South-East Asia and China.

In China a curious mixture of Confucianism and Taoism prevailed. A

1. See Rejendralal Mitra, "Beef in ancient India", *J.A.S.B*, 1872, pp. 174-196.

2. This inhuman practice, called *Satî*, was checked by law in 1829 by the English East India Company's government in India.

third trend was introduced into the land by the perverted form of Buddhism. It could not, however, make much headway till at a later time. Confucianism and Taoism were characterized by many idolatrous and superstitious beliefs and practices. Above all, magic, mesmerism and hypnotism dominated the religious life and these were mastered and practised by the priestly class chiefly to maintain their position as semi-gods or demi-gods to the common man. All these paved the way for the Chinese rulers to claim themselves to be gods to their own peoples and to demand their obeisance and worship as such.

While this was the socio-religious situation in the then "third world", the picture in the other two worlds was no better. In the Persian empire the original teachings of Zoroaster were largely forgotten. The book attributed to him, the *Avesta*, did not exist in its original form. An addendum to it was made by the priestly class in the defunct Zend (زند) language and the combined compilation came to be known as the *Zend-Avesta*. Only a couple of copies of that compilation existed at the time of Alexander's invasion. Those too were burnt and destroyed when he captured and burnt Persipolis in 330 B.C. A substitute *Zend-Avesta* was subsequently prepared. Out of the chaos and confusion there emerged, on the one hand, the worship of fire and, on the other, the deification of the forces of good, which was called *Ahura Mazda*, and that of the forces of evil, which was called *Ahura Man*.[1] Both were supplemented and accompanied by many idolatrous and superstitious practices resembling those of the Hindus. The *Ahura Mazda*, the god of good, as also fire were worshipped and temples and fire-places were erected in honour of them. In the beginning of the sixth century the confused social order was further confounded by the introduction of somewhat communistic reforms suggested by a thinker named Mazdak. He thought that all the social problems and evils were caused by man's urge to enjoy beautiful women and to possess wealth and land. Hence he advocated the abolition of the institution of marriage, making room for any man to enjoy any woman, and also the abolition of all proprietary rights except the right of the monarch to his possessions and treasures. The process was quickly reversed by king Anûshirwân who succeeded his father Kobad in 531 A.C. Even then, behind the facade of imperial greatness and apparently invincible military might

1. The term *Ahura* is a soft form of *Ashura* which to the Hindu signifies demon. The similarity is due to the basic unity of Indo-Aryan languages. Also the Hindu term *deota* or *deva*, meaning god, is similar to *deity* of Latin origin.

great social confusion and moral chaos prevailed throughout the Persian dominions.

In the Graeco-Roman or Byzantine world Christianity was the dominant religion. It did not consist of the original teachings of Jesus (p.b.h.) but was a syncretism between them and Graeco-Roman polytheistic ideas effected by St. Paul. The distinctive innovations made were the doctrine of incarnation, i.e., of Jesus's being God incarnate born in human form, those of the Trinity and of atonement. Many modern Christian scholars now acknowledge that the doctrines of incarnation and of the Trinity were adopted from the Greeks. These concepts, it may be recalled, were prevalent among the Hindus too. The syncretism was effected with a view to making the religion palatable and easily acceptable to the people of the Graeco-Roman world who had a long tradition of polytheism behind them. The Byzantine empire adopted and championed it to prop up the empire and to gain the adhesion of the "barbarians" and others who peopled it. Henceforth, in the name of Christianity, Paulism marched triumphantly on. The doctrines and the sacred texts were officially adopted at the Council of Nicea in 325 A.C. Even then sectarian differenes could not be stamped out. The most notable of the dissidents were the Nestorains who, on account of their insistence on the "dual nature of Christ", were persecuted. Most of them found shelter in the Byzantium's rival Persian empire. Similarly the Jews, persecuted by the Byzantine Christian authorities and their protégés migrated to Persia, Arabia and elsewhere. The revulsion against the Byzantine empire and the Christianity it championed may be gauged from the fact that in the former's continual conflict with the Persian empire the sympathy of the pagan Arabs and of the Jews in Arabia lay generally with the pagan Persian empire.

The Byzantine Emperor built beautiful churches in every part of the empire in which images of Jesus and Mary were placed and worshipped together with the singing of praises for "God in Three Persons". Churches were also built to the "Mother of God." The Byzantine state policy was shaped by the dream of a universal empire and a universal religion. This policy led to its intervention twice in south Arabia (Yaman) vicariously through the Christian Abyssinia. These moves were also in the nature of commercial warfare with the Persian empire. Following Abrahah's disastrous campaign against the Ka'ba in 570-71 A.C. the Yamani resistance to Abyssinian-Byzantine intervention was headed by Sayf ibn Dhî Yazan. In response to his request the Persian emperor sent a contingent to Yaman by sea. With

their support the Yamanis put an end to the Abyssinian rule there.[1] The Byzantines made a last serious attempt to plant Christianity at Makka itself by bringing about a change of government there through 'Uthmân ibn al-Ḥuwayrith; but he was rejected even by his own clan, Banû Asad.[2]

Such was the state of religion and politics in the world surrounding Arabia. It would be clear that polytheism, idolatry, superstitions and inhuman practices prevailed more or less almost everywhere in the then known world. In that perspective the Arabs' *jâhiliyyah* was only typical of the habits, attitudes and practices in the world surrounding them. The rise of Islam was as much a revolution to the Arabs as it was a check and disappointment to the Sasanid dream of world domination and the Byzantine dream of a universal empire and a universal religion.

1. Ibn Hishâm, I., 63-68.
2. *Infra*, pp. 330-334.

CHAPTER III
THE ORIENTALISTS ON SOME BACKGROUND TOPICS

The orientalists have done a good deal of work on the pre-Islamic history of Arabia, particularly on the ancient south and north Arabian civilizations, carrying out excavations at different sites, deciphering the inscriptions found and studying the ancient languages. It is not intended to survey these here.[1] The present chapter is concerned with the views expressed by a number of the orientalists on topics related more directly to the rise of the Prophet and of Islam. Of such topics the following deserve special mention.

(1) The concept of *Jâhiliyyah*;

(2) The Ka'ba and the Abrahamic tradition, including the intended sacrifice of Ismâ'îl;

(3) The supposed influence of Judaism and Christianity, and of the environment in general, upon the Prophet; and

(4) The socio-economic or materialistic interpretation of the rise of Islam.

Of these four topics, no.3 has been dealt with separately at a later stage in this work in connection with the Prophet's youth and life before his call to Prophethood.[2] No.4, the topic of materialistic interpretation, has been considered in the following chapter and also, some aspects of it, at a later stage in connection with the *Ḥarb al-Fijâr* and the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* and the question of relevance of the early teachings of the Qur'ân to the contemporary situation.[3] The present chapter, therefore, looks into the two remaining topics.

I. ON *JÂHILIYYAH*

The term *Jâhiliyyah* is generally translated by the orientalists as "Ignorance or Barbarism" and they take it to refer to *the period* before the rise of Islam. Writing early in the twentieth century R.A. Nicholson divided Arabian history into three periods — the Sabaean and Himyarite period (800 B.C.-500 A.C.), the "Pre-Islamic period" (500-622 A.C.) and the

1. For a consolidated account of most of the findings see Jawâd 'Alî, *Târîkh al-'Arab Qabl al-Islâm*, 8 Vols., Baghdad, 1369-1378.

2. *Infra*, Ch. XI

3. *Infra*, Chs. IX & XXIV.

"Muḥammadan period". He called the second period "the Age of Ignorance or Babarism". In an explanatory note he stated: "Strictly speaking, the *Jâhiliyyah* includes the whole time between Adam and Muḥammad, but in a narrower sense it may be used ...to denote the pre-Islamic period..."[1] At a subsequent stage in his work, while dealing with the history and legends of the pagan Arabs, he further stated: "Muḥammadans include the whole period of Arabian history from the earliest times down to the establishment of Islam in the term *Jâhiliyyah*". He then pointed out that Goldziher had shown, however, that the term *jahl* was to be understood not as an antonym of *'ilm,* but of *ḥilm*, and that it should therefore be taken to mean not so much "ignorance" as "wildness", "savagery", "the tribal pride and endless tribal feuds, the cult of revenge" and other pagan characteristics that Islam sought to remove.[2] On the basis of this interpretation Nicholson described the history and legends of the pagan Arabs as gleaned from the pre-Islamic poetry.

Closely following the treatment of Nicholson but writing some quarter of a century subsequently, P.K. Hitti similarly divided Arabian history into three main periods—the "Sabaeo-Himyrite period", the "Jahiliyyah period" and the "Islamic period". He then stated, almost echoing Nichololson, that in a sense *Jâhiliyyah* extends from the "creation of Adam down to the mission of Muḥammad"; but in reality it "means the period in which Arabia had no dispensation, no inspired prophet, no revealed book; for ignorance and barbarism can hardly be applied to such a cultured and lettered society as that developed by the south Arabians." He further says that the Prophet declared that Islam was to obliterate all that had gone before it and that this constituted a "ban on all pre-Islamic ideas and ideals"; but, he adds,"ideas are hard to kill, and no one person's veto is strong enough to cancel the past."[3]

Thus both Nicholson and Hitti take the term *Jâhiliyyah* primarily in the sense of a *period.* Hitti also gives his own definition of that period. Subsequent writers have generally followed them in taking the term in the sense of a period of Arabian history. it may be mentioned that classical Muslim scholars also did sometimes attempt to identify the period of *Jâhiliyyah*; but their emphasis was always on the habits, practices, traits and characteristics that

1. R.A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (1907), 1988 reprint, p. XXIV.
2. *Ibid.*, 30, citing Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien*, I, 225.
3. P.K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (1937), 10th edition, 1986 reprint, p. 87.

constituted *Jâhiliyyah*, and not so much on any specific period.[1] Indeed, it is in the sense of particular habits and practices and not as a period of history that the expression *Jâhiliyyah* was understood during the time of the Prophet and his immediate successors. At any rate, Muslim historians, even when speaking in terms of a period, did never identify *Jâhiliyyah* as a period between 500 and 622 A.C. This identification and limitation is Nicholson's when he says that the "second period", i.e. the "Pre-Islamic period" (500-622 A.C) "is called by Muḥammadan writers the *Jâhiliyyah*, i.e., the Age of Ignorance or Barbarism." No classical Muslim historian has so defined and identified *Jâhiliyyah*.

The confusion seems to have proceeded from an inexact English rendering of the term *Jâhiliyyah* as "ignorance" or "barbarism", a phenomenon not infrequent in the cases of such inexact renderings of Islamic technical terms into English or other languages. It is beacause of this rendering of the term as "ignorance" or "barbarism" that Nicholson, finding it obviously inapplicable to the Sabaean and Himyarite civilizations, excludes them from his identification of the "Age of Ignorance and Barbarism" and limits it to the period 500-622 A.C. While Nicholson is implicit, Hitti is explicit on this point. Hence he plainly points out that "ignorance and barbarism can hardly be applied to such a cultured and lettered society as that developed by the south Arabians." The same impression seems to have led Goldziher to point out that *Jâhiliyyah* is to be taken not as an antonym of *'ilm* but of *ḥilm* which, he says, means "the moral reasonableness of civilized man". It may only be pointed out that this definition too cannot strictly be applied to the pre-Islamic Arabs as a whole; for though many of them did not possess *ḥilm*, most of them valued it as an ideal and some of them did possess it . Also, this definition tends to sidetrack some very fundamental elements of *Jâhiliyyah*, namely, polytheism, idol worship, adultery and wrongfully depriving others of their rights. These characteristics are very much within the definition of *Jâhiliyyah*, though they may not be always outside the bounds of "lettered" and "cultured" society. Hitti's amended definition, namely, that *Jâhiliyyah* is "the period in which Arabia had no dispensation, no inspired prophet, no revealed book", is equally noncognizant of some very essential elements of *Jâhiliyyah* and is at its best ingenious. It is the result of the same initial confusion about the meaning being ignorance or

1. See for instance Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr*, XXII, 4.

barbarism. As such, it is as mistaken as is his further statement that the Prophet "declared that the new religion was to obliterate all that had gone before it." The Prophet did not obliterate all that had gone before it. On the contrary, both the Prophet and Islam approved and retained many pre-Islamic (not *Jâhiliyyah*) institutions and practices and claimed to continue and complete what the previous prophets had brought to mankind. And since Hitti's last mentioned statement is palpably wrong, his other remark based on it, that "no one person's veto is strong enough to cancel the past", is both inappraopriate and uncalled for.

If the technical term *Jâhiliyyah* must needs be translated, the word "error" or "misguidance" would probably come closer to the meaning. But it is not absolutely necessary to translate the term. The sense can be understood by following its usage. the Qur'ân, the Prophet and the early Muslims used the expression *Jâhiliyyah* to denote certain beliefs, habits and practices — a state of affairs — and not in the sense of a historical period. One very illustrative instance is the report of the speech on behalf of the Muslim emigrants at the Abyssinian court delivered by Ja'far ibn 'Abî Ṭâlib. He started his address saying: "*Jâhiliyyah* people were we, worshipping idols, eating dead animals, committing adultery and fornication (*al-fawâḥish*), ignoring blood-relations (*qat' al-riḥâm*), forgetting covenants of protection, the strong ones devouring the weak, etc."[1] The acts and practices enumerated are only an elucidation of *Jâhiliyyah*. Similarly 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbâs (r.a.), one of the earliest authorities on the interpretation of the Qur'ân, states that if one likes to understand the meaning of *jahl* one should read the *'âyahs* following *'âyah* 130 of *sûrat al-'An'âm* (no.6).[2] These *'âyahs*, particularly *'âyahs* 136-139, speak about the Arabs' polytheistic practices, their tabooing of certain animals, their killing of female babes, etc. Again, Ibn al-Athîr, one of the early authorities on the technical terms used in the reports (*ḥadîth*) very clearly states that *Jâhiliyyah* means "the state of affairs (*al-ḥâl*) in which the Arabs were before the coming of Islam."[3] It denotes a state of belief, habits and practices. As such it may not be confined to any specific period of time, nor to any given people. *Jâhiliyyah* existed in the past among the Arabs, as

1. Ibn Hisham, I, 336.
2. *Bukhârî*, no. 3524.
3. Ibn al-Athîr ('Abu al-Sa'âdat al-Mubârak ibn Muḥammad al-Jazarî, 544-606 H.), *Al-Nihâyah Fî Gharîb al-Ḥadîth wa al-'Athar*, ed. Ṭâhir Aḥmad al-Jâwzî & Maḥmûd Muḥammad al-Ṭanâḥî, Vol. I, n.d. p. 323.

also among many others of their contemporaries. It continues in places and peoples even after the coming of Islam.[1]

II REGARDING THE ABRAHAMIC TRADITION

(a) Consideration of Muir's views

Of greater import is, however, the opinions of the orientalists abut the Abrahamic tradition. Generally they deny that Prophet Ibrahîm (p.b.h.) ever came to Makka, that Hâjar and Ismâ'îl (p.b.h.) were ever left there by him and that the Ka'ba was built by him. They also assert that it was Isḥâq and not Ismâ'îl (p.b.t.), who was intended to be sacrificed. These views are as old as orientalism itself. It was Muir, however, who gave those views their modern form and pattern. And ever since his time others have mainly reproduced his arguments and assumptions.[2] "The connection of the Abraham myth with the Ka'bah", writes Margoliouth, "appears to have been the result of later speculation, and to have been fully developed only when a political need for it arose."[3] Of the others who reiterated and elaborated the same views mention may be made of J.D. Bate and Richard Bell. The former prepared an independent monograph entitled *Enquiries into the claims of Ishmael*[4] in which he set forth almost all that the orientalists have to say on the theme including the question of the sacrifice of Ismâ'îl. The latter, Richard Bell, suggested that the relevant Qur'ânic passages on the subject are "later" revisions during the Madinite period of the Prophet's mission.[5]

Clearly, the subject calls for a separate treatment. The scope of the present work, however, necessitates confining the present section to a consideration of Muir's views that are mainly elaborated and reiterated by his successors.

On the basis of the information contained in the Old Testament Muir says: "Hager, when cast forth by Abraham, dwelt with her son in the wild-

1. See Muḥammad Quṭb, *Jâhiliyyat al-Qarn al-'Ishrîn*, Cairo, 1384.

2. See For instance A Guillaume, *Islam*, London, 1964, pp. 61-62; P. Lammens, *L'Islam, Croyance et Institutions*, Beirut, 1926, pp. 28, 33.

3. D.S. Margoliouth, *Mohammed and the Rise of Islam*, 3rd edn., London, 1905, p. 104. This specific comment has been discussed at a subsequent stage in this work, *infra*, Ch. XIV, secs. I & II.

4. First published, London, 1926; republished in 1984.

5. R. Bell, "The Sacrifice of Ishmael", *T.G.U.O.S.*, Vol. X, 29-31; and "The Origin of the 'Îd al-Aḍḥâ", *M.W.*, 1933, pp. 117-120.

erness of Paran, to the north of Arabia."[1] He further says that the "divine promise of temporal prosperity" in favour of Ismâ'îl was fulfilled and his twelve sons became "twelve princes" whose descendants were founders of numerous tribes. These tribes, and also other Abrahamic and collateral tribes lived, according to Muir, in northern Arabia extending "from the northern extremity of the Red Sea towards the mouth of the Euphrates."[2] He admits, however, that the Abrahamic tradition and the legend connected with the Ka'ba were widely current and accepted in Arabia and Makka before the rise of Islam;[3] but he holds that these traditions, though earlier than Islam, grew there much subsequently to the time of Ibrâhîm. Muir mentions in this connection that though "a great proportion of the tribes in northern and central Arabia were descended from Abraham, or from collateral stock, we have no materials for tracing their history from the era of that patriarch for nearly two thousand years."[4] Therefore he proceeds to "conjecture"[5] the "facts" as follows. He says that there were earlier settlers at Makka, many of of whom were natives of Yaman. They brought with them Sabeanism, stone worship and idolatry. "These became connected with the well of Zamzam, the source of their prosperity; and near to it they erected their fane [the Ka'ba], with its symbolical Sabeanism and mysterious blackstone. Local rites were superadded; but it was Yemen, the cradle of the Arabs, which furnished the normal elements of the system."[6] Subsequently, an Ismâ'îlite tribe from the north, "either Nabataean or some collateral stock", was attracted there by its wells and favourable position for caravan trade. This tribe carried "in its train the patriarchal legend of Abrahamic origin" and engrafted "it upon the local superstitions." "Hence arose the mongrel worship of the Kaaba, with its Ishmaelitish legends, of which Mahomet took so great advantage."[7]

1. W. Muir, *The Life of Mahomet*, 1st edn, Vol. I., London, 1858, p. cxi, citing Gen. XXI:25; XXV:18.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*, pp.. cxv; cxxv.

4. *Ibid.*, p. cxvi.

5. Muir specifically uses this term twice, once at p. cxxv and again at p. cxxvi. He also designates his account as the "supposed history of the rise of Mecca and its religion". See side-note on p. ccxiv of the first edition and p. civ of the third revised edition by T.H. Weir, London, 1923.

6. *Ibid.*, 1st edn., p. ccxv.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. cxxv-cxxvi.

In support of this "conjecture" Muir advances a number of other suppositions. He says that though the existence of the Abrahamic tradition was extensive and universal, it is "improbable" that it "should have been handed down from the remote age of the patriarch by an independent train of evidence in any particular tribe, or association of tribes". According to him, "it is far more likely that it was borrowed from the Jews, and kept alive by occasional communication with them."[1] Having said so he states that so "extensive a homage," i.e., homage to the Ka'ba "must have its beginnings in an extremely remote age; and similar antiquity must be ascribed to the essential concomitants of the Meccan worship, — the Kaaba with its blackstone, sacred limits, and the holy months."[2] He then attempts to prove the great antiquity of the Ka'ba and its rites by mentioning that the Greek historian Herodotus (5th century B.C.) speaks of one of the chief goddesses of the Arabs and mentions her name as *Alilat* which "is strong evidence of the worship, at that early period, of *Allât* the Meccan idol."[3] Next Muir points out that the Greek author Diodorus Sicilus, writing in the first century B.C., spoke of a "temple" in Arabia which was "greatly revered by all the Arabs". Muir observes that this must refer to the Ka'ba, "for we know of no other which ever commanded the universal homage of Arabia."[4] Finally, Muir suggests that the practice of idolatry was old and widespread in Arabia and, on the authority of Ibn Hishâm (Ibn 'Isḥâq), points out that idolatrous shrines were "scattered from Yemen to Dûma [Dûmat al-Jandal] and even as far as Hîra, some of them subordinate to the Kaaba and having rites resembling those of Mecca."[5]

On the basis of such facts and arguments Muir states that there "is no trace of anything Abrahamic in the essential elements of the superstition. To kiss the black stone, to make the circuits of the Kaaba, and perform the other observances at Mecca, Arafat and the vale of Mina, to keep the sacred months, and to hallow the sacred territory, have no conceivable connection with Abraham, or with ideas and principles which his descendants would be likely to inherit from him."[6] These were according to him "either strictly

1. *Ibid.*, p. cxv. See also pp. cxxiv-cxxv.
2. *Ibid.*, p. ccxii.
3. *Ibid.*, p. ccx.
4. *Ibid.*, p. ccxi.
5. *Ibid.*, p. ccxiii.
6. *Ibid.*, p. ccx.

local" or being connected with the system of idolatry prevailing in the south of the peninsula, were imported to Makka by Banû Jurhum and others. And when the Abrahamic legend was grafted on "the indigenous worship, the rites of sacrifice and other ceremonies were now for the first time introduced, or at any rate first associated with the memory of Abraham ."[1] And once the legend was thus established at Makka, its "mercantile eminennce" which "attracted the Bedouins of Central Arabia" to it, "by degrees imparted a national character to the local superstition, till at last it became the religion of Arabia."[2] Finally, suggests Muir, the Prophet only took his stand on this "common ground", and effected a bridge between the "gross idolatry of the Arabs and the pure theism of Israel". "The rites of the Kaaba were retained, but stripped by him of every idolatrous tendency..."[3]

Clearly, this thesis of Muir's is based on four assumptions, namely, (a) that polytheism and polytheistic practices existed at Makka before the migration of the Ismailite tribe there; (b) that the Ka'ba and the rites connected with it are polytheistic and are of south Arabian origin, "having no conceivable connection with Abraham"; (c) that an immigrant Ismailite tribe superimposed the Abrahamic legend on those rites and (d) that the combined system was then by degrees adopted by the Arab tribes as the national religion.

The facts and arguments adduced by Muir do not, however, substantiate any of the four above-mentioned elements of the theory. With regard to the first assumption Muir mentions three facts. First, he says that the fifth century B.C. Greek historian Herodotus speaks of an Arabian goddess *Alilat*. Muir notes that Herodotus does not speak specifically about Makka but maintains that *Alilat* should be identified with the well-known Makkan (in fact Ṭâ'ifian) goddess *Al-Lât*. It should be pointed out that Herodotus in fact speaks with reference to north Arabia. Even taking his statement to apply to Arabia in general, and accepting the identification of *Alilat* with *Al-Lât*, the evidence would take us back only to the 5th century B.C., that is, by Muir's own admission, to a period some one thousand and five hundred years subsequent to that of Ibrâhîm. Muir's second fact is that the first century B.C. Greek writer Deodorus Sicilus speaks of a universally venerated Arabian

1. *Ibid.*, p. ccxvi.
2. *Ibid.*, p. ccxv.
3. *Ibid.*, ccxviii.

"temple". Muir rightly takes it to refer to the Ka'ba; but this evidence takes us back still less in point of time. i.e., only to the first century B.C. Muir's third fact is that polytheism and polytheistic shrines were widespread all over Arabia. He cites this fact on the authority of Ibn Hishâm (in fact Ibn Isḥâq). It should be pointed out that the latter speaks of a state of affairs that prevailed prior to the emergence of the Prophet. Neither Ibn Isḥâq nor any other autority implies that the situation obtained from time immemorial. Thus, none of the facts mentioned by Muir takes us back beyond the fifth century B.C. It cannot be suggested that the supposed migration of the Ismailite tribe to Makka took place so late as the fifth century B.C. or even after that; for, Muir himself admits that the descendants of Kedar, son of Ismâ'îl, became so widespread in northern and central Arabia that the Jews, i.e., the Old Testament, used to speak of the Arab tribes generally of those regions as Kedarites.[1] According to modern critics, the extant Old Testament was composed not later than the fifth century B.C. As it speaks of a state of affairs already prevailing in northern and central Arabia, which includes Makka, for a long time, and not of a recent dispersion of the Kedarite tribes over those regions, the Ismâ'îlite tribes must have been settled at Makka long before the fifth century B.C.

Muir's second assumption that the Ka'ba and its rites are polytheistic, that they are of south Arabian (Yamanî) origin and that they have "no conceivable connection with Abraham" is both incorrect and misleading. The Ka'ba and its rites must of course be assigned a very high antiquity, as Muir emphasizes. But that in itself does not prove them to be pre-Abrahamic in point of time, nor that they are south Arabian in origin. Muir does not advance any evidence to show that the Ka'ba is of south Arabian origin. If it was established in imitation of anything like it existing in Yaman, we should have found some trace of that original temple or some mention of it in ancient accounts; and it should have been initially more important and more venerated than its supposed imitation temple at Makka. But the existence of no such old or venerable temple is known, neither in Yaman nor elsewhere in Arabia, from any source, not even from the writings of the ancient Greek authors. To cite the evidence of Deodorus again. He speaks of only one universally venerated "temple" in Arabia, not of anything else like it or superior to it. The existence of a number of idolatrous shrines throughout

1. *Ibid.* See also *Isaiah* 21:16-17.

Arabia before the rise of Islam to which Ibn Isḥâq refers and of which Muir speaks, including even the "Yamani Ka'ba " of Abrahah, were all established subsequently to and in imitation of the Makkan Ka'ba , not before it. Muir simply attempts to put the cart before the horse when he draws attention to the existence of these Ka'ba-like idolatrous shrines in order to suggest that the Makkan Ka'ba was originally one such idolatrous establishment. Even then he is forced to admit that many of those idolatrous shrines were subordinate to the Ka'ba "having rites resembling those at Mecca". In fact none of those shrines was older than the Ka'ba, nor was any one of them regarded by the Arabs as of similar antiquity and commanding comparable veneration. This fact alone proves that those shrines were established in imitation of the Ka'ba. That they were devoted to idolatrous gods or godesses was also naturally in imitation of the idolatry which had in the meantime been installed at the Ka'ba, not *vice-versa*, as Ibn Isḥâq and others very distinctly mention. Idolatry had of course been prevalent in many of the surrounding countries since a much earlier period; but to prove that the Ka'ba was originally built as an idolatrous temple requires some more relevant evidence than what Muir has adduced. All that he has mentioned, to repeat, takes us back only to the fifth century B.C. He cannot imply that the Ka'ba was built so late as the 5th century B.C. or around that time.

Muir admits that the Abrahamic tribes of Arabia "originally possessed a knowledge of God." They indeed did; and it has been noted earlier that despite their declension into gross idolatry they had not lost sight of Allah (God) as the Supreme Lord of the universe. And it is remarkable that throughout the ages the Arabs used to call the Ka'ba the "House of Allah" or *Bayt Allah*. While all the other shrines were each named after some specific god or goddess, such as the shrine of Al-Lât, that of Al-'Uzzâ, that of Wadd and so on, the Ka'ba was never called after any such idolatrous deity, not even after the Quraysh's principal idol Hobal. If the Ka'ba was originally built for any idolatrous deity, the name of that deity would have remained associated with it. It cannot be supposed that the name of that deity was obliterated when the immigrant Ismâ'îlites allegedly superimposed the Abrahamic tradition upon the "temple". If such subsequent superimposition had at all taken place, it is more in accord with reason that the name of that idolatrous deity would have been conjoined with Allah at the time of the supposed integration of the Ka'ba with the Abrahamic tradition.

To prove the supposed idolatrous origin of the Ka'ba Muir states that the

"native systems of Arabia were Sabeanism, Idolatry and *Stone worship*, all connected with the religion of Mecca."[1] This is a highly misleading statement. The religious systems mentioned were of course prevalent in Arabia at different places and at different times, not equally and everwhere at the same time. Sabeanism with its worship of the heavenly bodies prevailed in south Arabia. Muir does not show how this system was "connected with the religion at Mecca" except saying that as late as the fourth century "sacrifices were offered in Yemen to the sun, moon and stars" and that the "seven circuits of the Kaaba were probably emblematical of the revolutions of the planetary bodies."[2] It is not understandable how sacrifices offered in Yaman "to the sun, moon and stars" could be connected with the religion at Makka. The Makkan unbelievers did of course offer sacrifices to their idols; but they did never do so by way of worshipping the sun, the moon and the stars! Indeed the practice of sacrificing animals, or even human beings, for gods and goddesses, had been prevalent among many ancient peoples before even Prophet Ibrâhîm's p.b.h.) intended sacrifice of his son to Allah. But none would therefore suggest that such sacrifices by the other ancient peoples or by Ibrâhîm were only symbolical of Sabeanism! In fact the term Sabeanism is derived from the Sabaeans who emerged on the scene of history much subsequently to the generally assigned date of the Ka‘ba. More specifically, worship of the heavenly bodies was prevalent among the ancient Greeks, among others. In that perspective Sabeanism was only a south Arabian manifestation of Hellenism.

More strange is Muir's statement that the "seven circuits of the Kaaba were probably emblematical of the revolutions of the planetary bodies". There is no indication whatsoever that the Sabaeans or other ancient worshippers of the heavenly bodies used to make seven circuits around any object as part of their astral worship. It is also quite unreasonable to suppose that the ancient Makkans or others of the time were aware of "the revolutions of the planetary bodies". If they had such modern astronomical knowledge, they would not have worshipped the heavenly bodies at all.

With regard to idolatry and stone worship Muir, after referring to what Ibn Isḥâq says about the existence of idolatrous shrines in Arabia and how the Ismâ‘ilites, when dispersing from Makka, used to carry with them a

1. Muir, op.cit., p. ccxii.
2. *Ibid.*

stone from the sacred precincts, states that this widespread tendency to stone worship probably "*occasioned* the superstition of the Kaaba with its black stone, than that it took its rise from that superstition."[1] As shown above, the evidence adduced by Muir does in no way show that the idolatrous shrines in Arabia and the attendant worship of stones or stone images came into existence before the erection of the Ka'ba. And Muir is grossly wrong in supposing that the Black Stone at the Ka'ba was symbolical of stone worship. Whatever the origin of the Black Stone and whatever the origin of stone worship in Arabia, the pre-Islamic Arabs, neither of Makka nor of the other places, are never found to have worshipped the Black Stone of the Ka'ba . The kissing of the Black Stone was no worship of the stone itself; it marked only the start of making the circuit around the Ka'ba. This circumambulation was not done for any specific idol in the Ka'ba or around it. It was to all intents and purposes a circumambulation of the House of Allah. And it is only an instance of the peculiar coexistence of the Abrahamic traditions and idolatry which the Makkan religion represented on the eve of the rise of Islam. It should be noted here that it was very much the practice of Ibrâhîm (p.b.h.) that in the course of his travels from one land to another he set up, wherever he halted, a stone to mark a place dedicated to the worship of Allah ("an altar unto God" as it is put in the English versions of the Old Testament).[2] That these places of worship were symbolized by stones erected as pillars is clear from Gen. 28:10, 18-22, which informs us that Jacob (Ya'qûb, p.b.h.), when he journeyed from Beer-Sheba to Haran, halted at night at a certain place and in the morning took the stone he had used as his pillow and "set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Beth-el." He further declared: "And this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house."[3] In fact these stone pillars were in the nature of foundation stones laid at different places where houses for God's worship were intended to be erected. The Black Stone of the Ka'ba was one such stone with which the patriarch Ibrâhîm (p.b.h.) laid the foundation of the House of Allah (Beth-el).[4] Neither was the Black Stone of the

1. *Ibid.*, pp. ccxiii-ccxiv.

2. Gen. 12:6-8; 13:4; 13:18. See also Gen. 25:25 which speaks of Isḥâq's similarly setting up an "altar" unto God.

3. Gen. 28:10, 18-19.

4. See Muḥammad Sulaymân Manṣûrpûrî, *Raḥmatullil-'Âlamîn*, (Urdu text), Delhi, 1980, p. 44.

Ka'ba symbolical of stone worship, nor were the Prophets Ibrâhîm, Isḥâq and Ya'qûb (p.b.t.), by any stretch of the imagination, stone worshippers on account of their erection of stone pillars as "altars unto God".

The dogmatic assertion that the rites connected with the Ka'ba "have no conceivable connection with Abraham, or with the ideas and principles which his descendants would be likely to inherit from him", is a downright misstatement. So far as the Black Stone is concerned, its connection with Ibrâhîm and with the ideas, practices and principles that his descendants were likely to inherit from him, are indubitably demonstrated by the above mentioned testimony of the Old Testament. That the institution of sacrifice also is very much in line with the Abrahamic tradition admits of no doubt, the incident of the intended sacrifice of his son being so clearly narrated in both the Old Testament and the Qur'ân. In this case too the coexistence of Abrahamic rites with idolatrous practices is noticeable. While the unbelieving Arabs used to sacrifice animals on various idol altars at different places, their sacrificing of animals at Minâ at the time of the pilgrimage was only in pursuance of the Abrahamic tradition. It was no sacrificing for any particular idols or their idols in general. Neither any idol nor any altar was there at Minâ or 'Arafât. Indeed the pilgrimage, the staying at Minâ, the standing at 'Arafât and the sacrifices made on the occasion were not done for any idol or idols. These were performed purely in accordance with the Abrahamic tradition. Muir's remarks about sacrifice are somewhat confusing. In attempting to show the supposed connection of Sabeanism with the Makkan religion he states, as mentioned earlier, that as late as the fourth century A.C. sacrifices were offered in Yaman "to the sun, moon and the stars". But while suggesting that the Abrahamic tradition was grafted on the supposedly pre-existing Ka'ba and its rites by an 'Ismâ'ilite tribe he states that "the rites of sacrifice and other ceremonies were now for the first time introduced, or at any rate associated with the memory of Abraham."[1] This statement of Muir's constitutes in fact a confession of the weakness of his theory and an admission that the "rites of sacrifce and other ceremonies" were very much connected with the Abrahamic tradition.

Indeed Muir's third and fourth suggestions, namely, that the Abrahamic tradition was superimposed on the supposedly pre-existent and idolatrous Ka'ba and its rites by an 'Ismâ'ilite tribe subsequently settling there, and

1. Muir, *op.cit.*, p. ccxvi. See also *supra*, p.72.

that this traditon was still more subsequently adopted "by degrees" on the part of the Arab tribes because of the commercial pre-eminence of Makka which attracted them thither, are more illogical and absurd. Both these assumptions run counter to his other statement that so "extensive a homage" to the Ka'ba and its rites "must have its beginnings in an extremely remote age."[1] The Ka'ba and its rites of course go back to a very remote antiquity. And it is also noted that Muir makes a distinction between the prior existence of the Ka'ba and the extensive homage to it on the one hand, and the Abrahamic tradition on the other, which according to him was superimposed on it and its rites. But that does not resolve the inconsistency and difficulty involved in his proposition. If the Arab tribes had since antiquity been paying extensive homage to the Ka'ba and its rites, they would not simply add to these institutions only the name of Ibrâhîm at a subsequent stage — for that is in essence what Muir suggests — just because an Ismâ'îlite tribe came to settle at Makka and imposed Ibrâhîm's name on the existing institutions. In all likelihood, such an illegitimate attempt on the part of an Ismâ'îlite tribe would have met with universal resistance, both from the pre-existing idolatrous population of Makka as well as from the Arab tribes.

Muir seems to have foreseen the difficulty. Hence he recognizes, on the one hand, the fact that the Arab tribes of northern and central Arabia were by and large of Abrahamic origin so much so that both the Jews and the Old Testament spoke of them as Kedarites (i.e., descendants of Ismâ'îl's son Kedar or Qaydar) and, on the other, attempts to make room for his theory in the situation by suggesting that it is "improbable" that the memory of the connection with Ibrâhîm "should have been handed down from the remote age of the patriarch by an independent train of evidence in any particular tribe, or association of tribes". As noted earlier, he suggests that "it is more likely that it was borrowed from the Jews, and kept alive by occasional communication with them."[2] Now, it is highly unlikely that an acknowledgedly conservative people like the Semitic Arabs, who of all people were the most attached to their ancient traditions, remembering their individual genealogies going back to a distant past, would have continued to venerate the Ka'ba and its rites as belonging to their common past, and at the same time forgetting the real fact of their descent from Ibrâhîm. The nature of

1. Muir, *op.cit.*, p. ccxii.
2. See *supra.* p 71.

"living tradition" is not that it should have been handed down "by an independent train of evidence in any particular tribe, or association of tribes." It is handed down from generation to generation by "popular memory", not by the memory or evidence of any particular individual or tribe. It is also just not correct to say, as Muir does, that the Arab tribes having supposedly forgotten their descent from Ibrâhîm "borrowed" the memory "from the Jews" and it was "kept alive by occasional communication with them." No people who had forgotten their common ancestor would accept the ancestor of another people as their ancestor too because the latter stated so, without further and an "independent train of evidence." The fact is that the Arab tribes of central and northern Arabia were not merely on "occasional communication" with the Jews. Throughout the ages till almost the beginning of the Christian era the Jews and the Kedarite tribes of northern and central Arabia were on constant contact with one another and they very much constantly remembered their common descent from Ibrâhîm. But leaving aside all these questions and going with Muir all the way, it is only reasonable to suppose that if the Jews at any point of time reminded the Arab tribes of their descent from their common patriarch Ibrâhîm, they would also have been told that that patriarch was no polytheist and that the (supposedly) pre-existing Ka'ba and its rites had no connection with him. Therefore the Arab tribes would not assoctiate the Ka'ba and its rites with the memory of Ibrâhîm even when they were reminded of their actual ancestor. But, since the Arab tribes, by Muir's admission and by all the available evidence did in fact associate the Ka'ba and its rites with Ibrâhîm for long before the coming of Islam, a natural corollary of Muir's suggestion is that the Jews, when reminding them of Ibrâhîm, must also have told them that the Ka'ba and its rites were of Abrahamic origin.

The unreasonableness of Muir's proposition does not end here. He says that the Ismâ'îlite tribe, when it came to settle at Makka, brought "in its train the patriarchal legend of Abrahamic origin" and engrafted "it on the local superstitions." Thus by Muir's own statement, when the Ismâ'îlite tribe came to Makka, they had not forgotten their Abrahamic origin. It is therefore reasonable to add that they had also not lost sight of the fact that Ibrâhîm was no polytheist. Hence they would not have desecrated the sacred memory of their ancestor by associating it with the (supposedly) pre-existing and polytheistic Ka'ba and its rites, the more so because these institutions had long been commanding the homage of the Arabs. In such a state, if they

intended to integrate themselves with the Arab tribes, or vice versa, they would have simply allowed the Abrahamic memory to remain in the background and would have accepted the Ka'ba and its rites as they were; for by so doing they would not have lost anything, neither their domicile nor the profitable trade of Makka. Since they did not do so, but accepted, as it is said, the Ka'ba and its rites as of Abrahamic origin, notwithstanding their having retained the memory of their descent from Ibrâhîm, and since also the Arab tribes accepted the Ka'ba and its rites as of Abrahamic origin, notwithstanding their constant touch with the collateral branch of Ibrâhîm's descendents, the Jews, the natural conclusion is that they did so because they *knew* that the Ka'ba and its rites *were* of Abrahamic origin. Thus a rational analysis of even Muir's theory of subsequent migration to and settlement at Makka by an Ismâ'îlite tribe, together with the other assumptions he makes and the facts he admits, leads to the unavoidable conclusion that the Ka'ba and its rites were of Abrahamic origin.

(b) About the Old Testament evidence

Muir's above discussed theory and assumptions proceed from his understanding of the information contained in Gen. 21:21. He says: "Hagar, when cast forth by Abraham, dwelt with her son in the wilderness of Paran, to the north of Arabia."[1] The above mentioned passage of the Genesis simply says that Ismâ'îl and his mother "dwelt in the wilderness of Paran". The clause, "to the north of Arabia", is Muir's own statement based understandably on the identification of Paran made by other Christitian writers and exegetes of the Bible. Paran is mentioned in connection with other events at three other places in the Old Testament.[2] But in none of all these places it is clear what exactly is the locality meant by the name Paran. The answer to the question where, according to Genesis 21:21, Hajar and Ismâ'îl settled thus depends on a correct identification of Paran.

The subject was in fact exhaustively dealt with by Syed Ahmed Khan Bahadur shortly after the appearance of Muir's work.[3] As the arguments on either side have not advanced much since that time, it would be worthwhile

1. Muir, *op.cit.*, p.cxi. Muir mistakenly cites in his footnote Gen. 21:25. It ought to be Gen. 21:21.

2. See Gen. 14:6; Num. 10:12; Num. 12:16.

3. Syed Ahmed Khan Bahadur, *Essay on the Historical Geography of Arabia*, London, Trubner & Co., 1869.

to recapitulate the main points made by him, adding to them such other facts or points as bear on the subject. He drew attention to the fact that the early Muslim geographers speak of three different places bearing the same name of Paran, namely, first, the wilderness where Makka now stands, together with the mountainous region adjacent to it; secondly, those mountains and a village that are situated in Eastern Egypt or Arabia Petra and; thirdly, a district in Samarkand.[1] He further pointed out that the Christian scholars and exegetes advance three different identifications of Paran. One view is that it comprised a vast area extending "from the northern boundary of Beer-Sheba as far as Mount Sinai"; the second view is that it was identical with Beer-Sheba, which was also called Kadesh; and the third view is that it was the wilderness lying on the "western slopes of Mount Sinai."[2] As regards these identifications the first two are obviously wrong, because the descriptions of the Old Testament itself clearly show Paran to be a distinct and different area, not a vast wilderness including many others such as the first identification would suggest, and also different from Beer-Sheba/Kadesh.[3] The third identification, that of Paran being a locality on the western slopes of Mount Sinai, tallies with one of the Parans mentioned by the Muslim geographers, but the locality was in all likelihood not known by the name of Paran at that time. For Moses, in the course of his journey with the Israelites from Egypt to Sinai, does not make any mention of Paran although he passed through the same locality and mentioned the places on the way. Most probably the place came to be known as Paran at a period subsequent to that of Moses on account of the settlement there of a branch of Banû Phârân, a Qahtanite tribe.[4]

None of these three localities, however, could have been the domicile of Hâjar and Ismâ'îl. For, in the first place, no local traditions exist to the effect that they settled in any of those localities. Secondly, though Moses and his followers are stated to have proceeded further from Sinai and having passed through "Taberah", "Kibrothhattaavah" and "Hazeroth" next halted at the

1. *Ibid.*, p. 74. See also Yâqût, *Mu'jam al-Buldân*, under Fârân.

2. Syed Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p.76, citing Kitto's *Cyclopaedia of the Bible* and *The Peoples' Bible Dictionary*.

3. Syed Ahmed, *op.cit.*, pp. 77-79. See also Gen. 14:5-7; Deut. 33:2; Hab. 3:3; Num. 10:12; 13:1-3, 6.

4. Syed Aḥmad, op. cit., p. 85.

wilderness of Paran,[1] the exact course taken by them is not clear. The Christian scholars themselves suggest as many as five different directions. Moreover, their statement that the descendants of Ismâ'îl spread over the area "from 'Shur to Havilah', or across the Arabian peninsula, from the borders of Egypt to the mouths of the Euphrates" is based on an incorrect identification of "Havilah" mentioned in Gen. 25:18. They, guessing on a slender similarity in sound, identify Havilah with Aval or Auwal of the Bahrayn islands. In reality, as Syed Ahmed points out, Havilah is a locality in the vicinity of Yaman, lying at Lat. 17° 30' N and Log. 42° 36, E, and called after Havilah, one of the sons of Joktan (Qaḥṭân).[2] It is thus evident "that the Ishmaelites settled in the wide tract of land extending from the northern frontiers of Yemen to the southern borders of Syria. This place now bears the name of Hedjaz, and it is identical with Paran", as mentioned by the Muslim geographers.[3] It is further noteworthy that an Arabic version of the Samaritan Pentateuch edited by R. Kuenen and published at Lugduni Batavorum, 1851, says in a note that Pharan and Hejaz are one and the same place.[4]

Thirdly, a close look at Gen. 21:14-15 would make it clear that the two consecutive passages do not really speak of one and the same occasion. The statement in Gen. 21:14 that Hâjar "wandered in the wilderness of Beer-Sheba" does not mean that she wandered only there and proceeded no farther. Nor does the statement in Gen. 21:15, "And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs", mean that the incident took place in or in the vicinity of Beer-Sheba. Nor does it mean that the same water in the bottle with which she had left her home "was spent" and therefore she was obliged to "cast the child under one of the shrubs". Beer-Sheba was a place well known to her, Ibrâhîm having lived there with her for long. There were also a number of wells scattered over the region and dug by different persons, as the Old Testament very clearly states at a number of places. The well at Beer-Sheba itself was dug by Ibrâhîm. All these could not have been unknown to Hâjar. She could therefore have obtained further water, after a little search, from any of the many wells in the area. In fact the Old Testament writer here describes, in two very short and consecutive

1. See Exod. 15:32; 17:8; 18:5; 19:2 and Num. 10:12; 11:34; 12:16; 13:26 and 14:25.
2. Syed Ahmad, *op.cit.*, p. 80. See also Gen. 10:29.
3. Syed Ahmad, *op.cit.*, p. 80.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.

passages, the long and arduous wanderings made by Hâjar, of which the beginning was her wanderings in Beer-Sheba and the last stage was at such a place where she could get no water, nor replenish her bottle in any way. So in utter distress and despair she cast the child under one of the shrubs. The two passages speak of two different stages of her wanderings, separated by not too small gaps of time and place.

Fourthly, the causes and circumstances that led to Hâjar's and Ismâ'îl's banishment from home, as described in the Old Testament, also indicate that they travelled to a land quite away from the area where Sârah and Ibrâhîm continued to live. According to the Genesis, Sârah wanted that Ismâ'îl should not be heir with her son Isḥâq. So also, according to the Genesis, it was God's plan that Ismâ'îl and his descendants should settle in and populate another land. The Genesis very graphically describes the situation thus:

"11. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son."

"12. And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of the bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called."

"13. And also the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he *is* thy seed."

"14. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave *it* unto Hagar,..."etc.[1]

Thus it is very clear from the Genesis that it was not really because of Sârah's desire but decisively because of God's plan and assurance of a fruitful future for Ismâ'îl communicated to Ibrâhaîm, and His command to him, that he banished Hâjar and Ismâ'îl to a different land. God's words to Ibrâhîm, "for in Isaac shall thy seed be called", was a consolation as well as an assurance that the banishment of Ismâ'îl did not mean an end to, or a constriction of the line of Ibrâhîm's descendants. The statement, "in Isaac shall thy seed be called" meant that Ibrâhîm's progeny will continue there where he was at that time, through Isḥâq; whereas the other statement was an empahsis on the fact that Ismâ'îl *was* his seed ("he *is* thy seed) but his progeny will be multiplied and made into a nation in another region. By the very nature of this plan of God's (and Sârah's desire to exclude Ismâ'îl from his father's immediate possessions was itself part of God's plan), Hâjar and

1. Gen. 21:11-14.

Ismâ'îl could not have been settled in any place in the region of Beer-Sheba and Sinai, which were very much then within the sphere of Ibrâhîm's and Sârah's activities. Hâjar and Ismâ'îl could only have been, and were indeed consigned to a far-away and unsettled land. The Paran/Fârân mentioned in the Genesis as their domicile could not simply have been any Paran in and around Beer-Sheba and Sinai, as the Christian scholars imagine.

Fifthly, as regards the exact location of Hâjar's and Ismâ'îl's domicile Genesis 21 also furnishes a clue. Thus, when Hâjar in her utter distress and helplessness prayed unto God and also the child Ismâ'îl cried out of hunger and thirst, God responded to them. Says the Genesis:[1]

"17. And God heard the voice of the lad; and the Angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he *is*."

"18. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation."

"19. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink."

Thus God provided Hâjar and Ismâ'îl with a well of water, *on the spot* where they were ("God has heard the voice of the lad where he *is*.") Hâjar did not have to look around and walk any distance to find the well. "God opened her eyes", i.e., God made her open her eyes,[2] "and she saw a well of water." It was not simply a temporary relief. It was God's especial gift for them to be the means of their sustenance and settlement there in accordance with His plan and promise to "make a nation" out of Ismâ'îl. This divinely provided well cannot be identfied with any well in Beer-Sheba and its surrounding region for the simple reason that none of these wells is mentioned in the Old Testament as God-given. On The contrary they are very distinctly described as the work of human hand. Nor is there any local tradition pointing to the existence there, now or in the past, of any divenely caused well. To attempt to identify the well given by God to Ismâ'îl and Hâjar with any of the wells in the Beer-Sheba region would be an affront to the clear wording and purport of the text of the Genesis. This well is unmistakably the Zamzam well by the side of the Ka'ba. Ever since the time of

1. Gen. 21:17-19.

2. Obviously Hâjar was deeply absorbed in prayer with her eyes closed.

Hâjar and Ismâ'îl it has continued to be a perennial source of water for the descendants of Ismâ'îl and others who repair there, except for a short period of human tampering with it.

Last but not least, the name of Makka, which is also called Bakka in the Qur'ân,[1] finds mention in the Psalm of David, together with the well too. Thus Psalm 84:6 says:

"Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools."

'Baca' in the above passage is clearly Bakka of the Qur'ân, and the well spoken of is the well of Zamzam. It is also noteworthy that ancient works on history and georaphy make mention of floods being caused at Makka by occasional heavy rains, a feature not quite unknown even in modern times — thus completing the identification with Makka — "the rain also filleth the pools."

Thus, despite some obvious discrepancies in the description of the Genesis,[2] it is in consonance with all the essential features in the Qur'ânic and Islamic accounts; and they combinedly prove that Hâjar and Ismâ'îl were settled at Makka, according to the Divine plan and provision.

(c) *Ismâ'îl or Isḥâq?* (p.b.t.)

Just as the orientalists deny that Hâjar and Ismâ'îl were settled at Makka, in order to suggest that the Ka'ba and its rites have no connection with Ibrâhîm, similarly they deny that Ismâ'îl was the object of the intended sacrifice by Ibrâhîm, in order to suggest that Isḥâq was the "child of promise" and favour. And just as being faced with the undeniable fact that the Ismâ'îlites were indeed settled at Makka and in Arabia generally for long prior to the coming of Islam, the orientalists suggest the theory of subsequent migration by the Ismâ'îlites to Makka and the surrounding region, similarly, being confronted with the equally incontrovertible fact that the descendants of Ismâ'îl did indeed multiply greatly and flourished as a great nation, as promised by God, they (the orientalists) resort to the theory of "temporal" and "spiritual" blessings. Thus the Bible exegetes as well as the orientalists

1. Q. 3:96.

2. One such obvious discrepancy relates to the age of Ismâ'îl at the time of his banishment. Genesis 21:5-9 would show that he was about 16 years old at the time, while Gen. 21:16, 19, 20 would show that he was a "child" and "lad" at the time. The latter view is the correct one.

suggest that "God's promise of *temporal prosperity*" in favour of Ismâ'îl was fulfilled in his twelve sons and their multitudinous descendants, but Isḥâq was the obeject of both "temporal" and "spiritual" blessings. Apart from this premise of the orientalists, their main objection to Ismâ'îl's being the object of the intended sacrifice is based on Genesis 22, particularly 22:2.

The distinction between things "temporal" and things "spiritual" is essentially a medieval European concept arising out of the relationships between the "Empire" and the "Papacy". According to this concept "temporal" matters belonged to the jurisdiction of the Emperor, while "spiritual" matters fell within the dominion of God (Pope). This dichotomy underlies the modern western distinction made between "religion" and "state". Whatever the merits of the concept, a strict regard to it and to chronology should have prevented its application to God's dealings in dim antiquity with the sons of Ibrâhîm.

The premise is, however, not at all borne out by the facts mentioned in the Old Testament. A cursory look at the relevant passages should make it clear that analogous promises were made in respect of both Ismâ'îl and Isḥâq. There is nothing which was promised to the latter but not to the former. Rather, on a careful reading, it would appear that promises made in respect of Ismâ'îl were earlier and repeated a number of times even after Isḥâq's birth. It is thus not understandable where in the Bible do the exegetes and the orientalists get the impression that Ismâ'îl was promised only temporal prosperity and Isḥâq was promised both aspects of it, temporal as well as spiritual.

To mention only a few instances. Thus, long before either Ismâ'îl or Isḥâq was born, Ibrâhîm received God's blessings on his progeny. Says the Gensis 12:

"Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee. 2. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: 3. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. 4. So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram *was* seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran."[1]

1. Gen. 12:1-4.

The same promise was repeated in more specific terms when Hâjar conceived Ismâ'îl. It was God Who named her son Ismâ'îl. The relevant and very significant passage runs thus:[1]

"And the angel of the LORD said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. 11. And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou *art* with a son, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction."

Thirdly, God's "covenant" was in fact made, together with a repetition of the promise of blessings, with Ibrâhîm and Ismâ'îl well before the birth of Isḥâq. Ibrâhîm was then ninety-nine years old and Ismâ'îl, thirteen. The covenat was made and sealed with the token of circumcision which was performed by Ibrâhîm and Ismâ'îl and that also before the birth of Isḥâq. And it was on that occasion that God changed the patriarch's name from "Abram" to Abraham (Ibrâhîm). The text runs as follows:

"And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I *am* the Almighty God; walk before me and be thou perfect. 2. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. 3. And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him saying, 4. As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. 5. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee... 7. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after me in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee... 9. And God said unto Abraham, thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. 10. This *is* my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after me; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. 11. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you...24. And Abraham *was* ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 25. And Ishmael his son *was* thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 26. In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son. 27. And all the men of his house... were circumcised with him."[2]

Thus God's "covenant" with Ibrâhîm and his "seed" Ismâ'îl was made and

1. Gen. 16:10-11.
2. Gen. 17:1-5, 7, 9-11, 24-27.

sealed with the token of circumcision before Isḥâq's birth. In fact it was on that occasion that God gave Ibrâhîm the good news of another son for him through Sârah, adding that the covenant would be made with him too. Note the text.[1]

"15. And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sârah *shall* her name *be*. 16. And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea I will bless her, and she shall be *a mother* of nations; kings of people shall be of her... 19. And God said, Sârah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, *and* with his seed after him... 21. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sârah shall bear unto thee at this time in the next year."

It should be noted that God's statements in the above passage, "and I will establish my covenant with him" (i.e. Isḥâq, Gen. 17:19) and "But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sârah shall bear unto thee..." (Gen. 17:21), are in the nature of a reiteration of the covenant already made with Ibrâhîm and his seed "after him in their generations for an everlasting covenant", as mentioned in the passage preceding the above one (i.e. in Gen. 17:7, 9-11). The statements in Gen. 17:19 and 21 are an assurance given to Ibrâhîm by God that when born, Isḥâq too will be admitted in the covenant that had already been made with Ibrâhîm and sealed by his and son Ismâ'îl's circumcision on the same day. In no way can the statements be taken to mean that God cancelled that covenant or indicated that He would be making a fresh covenant with Isḥâq abrogating or modifying the previously made one with Ibrâhîm. That the statements in question were meant to be a continuation and confirmation of the covenant in respect of Isḥâq is further clear form three other facts, namely, (a) that the promises made regarding Ismâ'îl and his progeny were repeated after Isḥâq's birth;[2] (b) that Isḥâq, when born, was simply initiated into the covenant by Ibrâhîm by cirmucising him on the eighth day of his birth, as God had directed;[3] and (c) that no further act was done to indicate that God's covenant was henceforth exclusively meant for Isḥâq and his descendants. The text relating to Isḥâq's birth and initiation into the covenant runs as follows;[4]

1. Gen. 17:15-16, 19, 21.
2. Gen. 17:20; 21:13; 21:18.
3. See Gen. 15:12.
4. Gen. 21:1-5.

"And the Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did unto Sarah as he had spoken. 2. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. 3. And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac. 4. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him. 5. And Abraham was an hundred years old when his son Isaac was born unto him."

Thus was Isḥâq initiated into the "covenant" already made with Ibrâhîm by the performance of his (Isḥâq's) circumcision on the eighth day of his birth, as commanded by God. There is nothing here or elsewhere to suggest that God had made a separate and exclusive covenant with Isḥâq abrogating or modifying the one previously made with his father. In fact, it was only the covenant made by God with Ibrâhîm into which he and his first son Ismâ'îl had been initiated earlier by the performance of circumcision on the same day, while Isḥâq was initiated a year later, when he was born.

That the promises and blessings were made equally for Ismâ'îl and Isḥâq would be clear from the following:

(1) *Before Ibrâhîm had any son he was promised by God*:

(a) "And I will make thee a great nation... in thee shall families of the earth be blessed." (Gen. 12:2-3)

(b) "... Unto thy seed I will give this land / Canaan /." (Gen. 12:7)

(c) that his "seed" shall be as numerous as the stars in the heaven. (Gen. 15:5)

(d) God said to Ibrâhîm: "Unto thy seed I have given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates." (Gen. 15:18)

(2) *After the birth of Ismâ'îl and at the time of making the covenant God promised Ibrâhîm*:

"I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after me, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession;..." (Gen. 17:8)

(3) *After the birth of both Ismâ'îl and Isḥâq, but without specific reference to either, Ibrâhîm was promised by God*:

"... I will bless the, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which *is* upon the sea shore;... And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed..." (Gen. 22:17-18)

(4) *God blessed*:

Hâjar: (Gen. 16:10-11)

Sârah (Gen. 17:15-16)

(5) *God gave the good news of a son to*

Hâjar (Gen. 16:10-11)

Sârah (Gen. 17:16,19)

(6) *God named*:

Ismâ'îl (Gen. 16:11)

Isḥâq (Gen. 17:19)

(7) *God promised to multiply the progeny of*:

Hâjar (Gen. 16:10)

Sârah (17:16)

(8) *God's promises in repect of*

Ismâ'îl: "Will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation." (Gen. 17:21)

"I will make him a great nation." (Gen. 21:18. See also Gen. 21:13)

Isḥâq: No such promises.

It should be clear from the above that analogous promises were made in respect of both Ismâ'îl and Isḥâq and both were equally intiated into the covenant made by God with Ibrâhîm. There is nothing to show that the elder and the first born was blessed only temporally and the younger son was blessed both temporally and spiritually. The sequence of events narrated in the Old Testament brings out two important facts. It shows, in the first place, that God made His covenant with Ibrâhîm when he was 99 years old and his son Ismâ'îl was 13 years old. Secondly, it was after the making of the covenant that God gave the good news of another son for Ibrâhîm through Sârah. These two broad facts fit in well with the Qur'ânic account which says that God specially blessed Ibrâhîm and made the covenant with him after he had passed the tests, including the test of sacrificing his son, and that it was after that event that God gave him the good news of another son for him through Sârah.

An apparent conflict in the two accounts is created, however, by what the Genesis says about the intended sacrificing of his son by Ibrâhîm. Thus, after having spoken of God's making the covenant with Ibrâhîm, of his and his son Ismâ'îl's circumcision on the same day, of the birth and circumcision of Isḥâq, it proceeds to deal with the incident of the sacrifice and states as follows:

"And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham,... 2. And he said. Take now thy *son*, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." (Gen. 22:1-2)

On the basis of this passage the orientalists deny that Ismâ'îl was the object of the intended sacrifice and assert that it was Isḥâq who was offered for sacrifice. But this particular statement of the Genesis 22:2 suffers from an obvious contradiction. It says "thine only son Isaac." Now, at no point of time in Ibrâhîm's life was Isḥâq his *only* son; for the latter was born when Ibrâhîm's first son Ismâ'îl was fourteen years old and both he and Isḥâq were alive when their father Ibrâhîm died at the age of 175. Clearly, then, an error has occurred in the statement. Either the expression *only* should not have been there or the name of the son ought to have been Ismâ'îl instead of Isḥâq. But the expression *only son* occurs twice more in the chapter, at Gen. 22:12 and 22:16; at both of which places God expresses His especial pleasure over Ibrâhîm's not having withheld his *only son* from Him, and blesses him particularly on that account, stating: "I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven,... And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice."[1] There can be no doubt, therefore, that the *only son* of Ibrâhîm was asked and offered for sacrifice. It is noteworthy that at these two latter places the name of the son is not mentioned. Clearly, then, the error *is* in the writing of the name of the son in this account of the Genesis. The name ought to have been Ismâ'îl, instead of Isḥâq, who for fourteen years was the *only son* of Ibrâhîm. The mistake in the writing of the son's name in Gensis 22:2 occurred most probably not at the hand of the Bible author but at the hand of a subsequent scribe or compiler, who altered the text in favour of Isḥâq. If the mistake is rectified by writing the name of Ismâ'îl in place of Isḥâq the whole chapter of the Genesis would be relieved of the incongruity and the account would fit in well with the nature of

1. Gen. 22:17-18.

promise made earlier by God in respect of Ismâ'îl in Gen. 16:10 saying: "I will multiply thy seed", and again in 17:20 in a slightly modified form, "I will multiply him exceedingly, etc". The similarity of this blessing with the blessing contained in Gen. 22:17, "I will multiply thy seed" and uttered to Ibrâhîm is striking. The appropriateness of this particular blessing for Ismâ'îl is further indicated by what actually came to pass. For though Prophets and princes arose from among Isḥâq's descendants, as God had promised to his mother Sârah, it was in Ismâ'îl's descendants that God's promise of multiplying his "seed" exceedingly was admirably fulfilled. Ismâ'îl's descendants became far more numerous and spread over a far wider area than did the descendants of Isḥâq.

That Ismâ'îl should have been the name of the *only son* in Gen. 22 is obvious from the context and sequence of events described in the Genesis itself. In the first place, it would be to no purpose that God should proceed to test the depth of Ibrâhîm's faith after He had made the covenant with the patriarch, promised him all the blessings, given him Ismâ'îl and Isḥâq and had also abundantly blessed them too. Rather, it is only in the fitness of things that God should have tested the faith of Ibrâhîm before bestowing upon him all the favours and blessings and, above all, before making an everlasting covenant with him. It is also noteworthy that the blessing contained in Gen. 22:17-18 adds, "because thou hast obeyed my voice." The special blessings of God were thus bestowed upon Ibrâhîm *after* he had passed God's test, not before it. Secondly, it would have been also very unkind and inconsistent on God's part to have asked Ibrâhîm to sacrifice Isḥâq too, after having commanded the patriarch to banish his first-born to a distant land, having also consoled him over his grief over the matter and, further, after having assured him that "in Isaac shall thy seed be called", that is, continued in the region where they were. Thus the internal evidence of Genesis 22 and the overall sequence of events and reason combinedly suggest that it was Ibrâhîm's first-born and the *only son*, Ismâ'îl, who was asked and offered for sacrifice.

The orientalists have of course their theories to explain the expression "only son" occurring in Gen. 22. The most frequently made plea is based expressly or implicitly on the following statement in the New Testament:[1]

"For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, and the other by a freewoman. But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman *was* by promise."

1. Galatians 4:22-23.

It has been pointed out earlier that the expression "bondmaid" or "bondwoman" applied in the Bible to Ibrâhîm's wife Hâjar is incorrect and is the result of spite for Ismâ'îl.[1] Particulalry after her marriage with Ibrâhîm, as the evidence of the Bible itself shows — "And Sarai... gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife"[2] — she attained the rank of a duly married wife to a Prophet. Ismâ'îl was therefore a legitimate son born in wedlock. Any suggestion of his being an illegitimate child and therefore not to be reckoned a son to Ibrâhîm would be preposterous, an affront to the memory of the father of Prophets Ibrâhîm and directly contrary to the repeated statements in the Old Testament that Ismâ'îl was Ibrâhîm's "seed" and "son". The "son" whom God blessed repeatedly, repeatedly promised to "make him a nation", to "multiply his seed exceedingly" and to cause "twelve princes" to be begotten by him, cannot simply be regarded as a non-entity except by one who has no faith in the Bible nor in the words of God. Moreover, according to the Bible the right of the first-born belongs to Ismâ'îl. The Old Testament says that if a person has two wives, one "hated" and the other "beloved", and if he has two or more sons by these two wives and if the first-born is by the wife that is hated, the right of the first-born is his and he should get double the portion of the other sons in the inheritance.[3] It may once again be stressed that the claim that Isḥâq was the exclusive recipient of God's "spiritual" blessing is totally wrong.

Whatever might be the distinction implied in the above quoted statement of the New Testament, neither was Ismâ'îl born only "after the flesh", nor was Isḥâq born only "by promise". Both of them were born of father and mother. The mothers of both of them, Hâjar and Sârah, were blessed by God. Both of them were promised and given the good tidings of the coming of their respective sons by God. The names of both the sons were selected and communicated to their mothers by God. Both of them were thus born "by promise" as well as "after the flesh". If Isḥâq was more "by promise" because God promised him to Ibrâhîm as a reward for his proven faith, as both the Old Testament and the Qur'ân show, it was all the more reason why God would not have asked Ibrâhîm to sacrifice Isḥâq because he was given as a reward and a favour. Finally, it may be pointed out that no trace is to be found in the religious ceremonies of the descendants of Isḥâq of his suppo-

1. See *supra*, p.33.
2. Gen. 16:3.
3. Deut. 21:15-17.

sedly having been offered for sacrifice. On the other hand, the descendants of Ismâ'îl and the followers of the Abrahamic religion all over the world commemorate the event every year on the tenth day of the last month of the Arabic calendar. It is also they, unlike the others, who invoke in their daily compulsory and optional prayers blessings upon Ibrâhîm and his progeny (not excluding the descendants of Isḥâq), thus demonstrating their faith in what God said to Ibrâhîm: "And I will bless them that bless thee,... and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."[1]

1. Gen. 12:3.

CHAPTER IV

ON THE MATERIALISTIC INTERPRETATION OF THE RISE OF ISLAM

I. THE EARLIER EXPLANATIONS

At the very outset of his work Watt explains his standpoint and declares that he writes "as a professing monotheist" and does not "regard the adoption of a materialistic outlook as implicit in historical impartiality"; but that the need for a "fresh life of Muḥammad has been felt for sometime" because "in the last half-century or so" historians had become "more conscious of the material factors underlying history." Even those, he further says, who like himself denied "that such factors entirely determine the course of events have to admit their importance." He therefore claims that the "special feature" of his biography of Muḥammad (ﷺ) is "that it pays fuller attention to these material factors and attempts to answer questions that have hardly been raised in the past."[1]

Thus by his own admission he follows the trend which specially characterized historical writing in the first half of the twentieth century, namely, paying greater attention to the material factors underlying history". How far he breaks new ground in his biography of the Prophet may be seen if we refer briefly to the principal economic interpretations of the rise of the Prophet and Islam advanced by his predecessors.

The first notable theory in this respect was that of Hubert Grimme who in 1892 came forward with a straight socialistic explanation of the rise of Islam, treating it as simply the outcome of the usual struggle between the "haves" and "have-nots."[2] The defects and inappropriateness of this rather simplistic interpretation were quickly and decisively pointed out by C.

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, Introduction, X-XI. Even such careful reservations about his materialistic approach did not save Watt the disapproval of the more pious of his compeers, one of whom accused the "Episcopalean clergyman" of Marxism. (G.H. Bousquet's remarks cited in Maxime Rodinson, "A critical survey of modern studies on Muḥammad", *Studies on Islam*, ed. Marlin Swartz, O.U.P., 1981, p. 47.) Rodinson himself, being professedly a materialist, praises Watt for the "sharpness" and "clarity" of his conclusions (*ibid.*, 46, 47) and adopts in his work, *Moḥammed*, the lines of approach suggested by Watt.

2. Hubert Grimme, *Mohammed* (Darstellungen etc., Band 7), Vol. I., Munster, 1892, Ch. I., especially p. 14.

Snouk Hurgronje[1] whose trenchant analysis thenceforth put the orientalists on their guard against that interpretation. About the same time attention was being paid to the fact, which is evident from the sources, that the Makkans were mainly a community of traders and merchants for at least several decades prior to the rise of Islam. This fact was more specially brought to notice by J. Wellhausen who ascribed Makka's greatness and importance mainly to the ability of the Quraysh "who understood better than others how to draw water out of their own well, and make their neighbours' waters flow in their channels."[2] The same fact was highlighted also by C.C. Torrey who, concentrating on the commercial terms and figures of speech in the Qur'ân suggestes that it appeared in an atmosphere of commerce and high finance.[3] This renewed emphasis on the commercial character of pre-Islamic Makkan society, together with the general trend with the orientalists to emphasize the influence of Judaism and Christianity on Arabian life, led to the growth of another line of thought, namely, that paganism was becoming unfashionable and inadequate in satsifying the religious need of the more advanced Makkans and that "devout believers in Al-Lât and Al-'Uzzâ were thought by those who had been in the great world to be behind the times."[4]

Reflecting all these views Margoliouth wrote in the early twentieth century that "the Meccan heads of houses are represented as forming a joint-stock company for the purpose of foreign trade, the profits on each occasion being divided proportionately among the investors, and by them expended or hoarded, or invested in fresh speculations..."[5] He further suggested that because of this "healthy" nature of the Makkan society Muḥammad's (ﷺ) mission "was a failure" there whereas it "readily found a hearing" at Madina "which had been suffering for years from the curse of civil war."[6] Margoliouth concluded:[7]

1. C. Snouk Hurgronje, "Une nouvelle biographie de Moḥammed" *R.H.R.*, 1894, pp. 48-70, reproduced in Hurgronje, *Selected Works etc.*, Leiden, 1957, pp. 109-149.

2. J. Wellhausen, *Reste Arabischen Heidentums*, 2nd edition, Berlin, 1897, p. 93, quoted in Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, p. 32.

3. C.C. Torrey, *The Commercial-Theological Terms of the Koran*, Leiden, 1892.

4. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, p. 24.

5. *Ibid.*, 30-31.

6. *Ibid.*, 31.

7. *Ibid.*, 44.

"Had Meccah continued to increase in wealth and power under her sagacious leaders, it is not probable that her people would have remained satisfied with a religious system that was thought barbarous in the countries whence she would have been compelled to obtain science and learning. Yet the fact that the old religion was the source of her material prosperity would have rendered the substitution for it of either Christianity or Judaism impracticable. The ideal solution of the problem was clearly that discovered in time by Mohammed of superseding both the enlightened religions; retaining the old source of wealth, but in a system which, so far from being backward, was in advance of the cult of the Roman Empire."

It is of course true the Makkans were mainly a commercial community on the eve of the rise of Islam; but there seems to be an over-emphasis on this fact in the above-mentioned writings, particularly in that of C.C. Torrey. It must be pointed out that in so far as the Qur'ân is concerned, agricultural terms and imageries are no less numerous and vivid in it than what is called the "commercial-theological" terms.[1] The whole worldy life is likened in the Qur'ân to a cultivating field for securing provision for the life in the hereafter.[2] The doctrine of monotheism, the central theme of the Qur'ân, is sought to be brought home by repeated references to Allah's grace and bounty in sending down rains from the sky and thereby enlivening the barren earth and causing plants, fruits and corns to grow out of it. Even paradise is generally depicted as a well-laid garden with all kinds of delicious fruit-trees and streams running through them. As Allah brings forth plants out of the earth, so will He raise the dead from it on the resurrection day.[3] Even the act of procreation and therefore the process of continuing human race is likened to cultivating one's own field.[4] On the basis of such expressions and statements one could state equally confidently that the Qur'ân appeared against an essentially and predominantly agricultural background!

That would however be an another misleading conclusion; for over-emphasis on any single aspect of the information contained in the Qur'ân or other sources, to the neglect of the other aspects, is bound to yield an incorrect or distorted picture of the total situation. This is illustrated equally well

1. See for instance Q. 2:71; 2:223; 2:264-266; 6:136-138; 6:141; 13:3-4; 16:11; 18:32-42; 26:146-148; 34:15-16; 36:33-36; 44:25-27; 48:29; 50:7-11; 56:63-64; 68:22; 71:11-12; 78:16, etc.

2. Q. 42:20.

3. Q. 35:9; 50:11.

4. Q. 2:223.

by Margoliouth's statement noted above. Its main drawback is that it suggests the same fact as the cause of the rise of Islam on the one hand, and as the cause of its "failure" at Makka on the other. For Margoliouth says that because Makka continued to flourish as a commercial community Muḥammad (ﷺ) only effected an "ideal solution" of the resultant socio-religious anomaly by devising a "system" which retained "the old source of wealth" but which "was in advance of the cult of the Roman Empire"; but his mission "was a failure" there because it was a "healthy" commercial community! Such contradiction is only indicative of the basic incorrectness of both the premise and the conclusion. Neither was the Makkan society on the eve of the rise of Islam as healthy as Margoliouth imagines it to be, nor did Muḥammad (ﷺ) just effect an adjustment of the imbalance between Makka's socio-economic growth on the one hand and its primitive religious system on the other by simply devising a system in which he retained the old source of wealth. If Muḥammad's (ﷺ) role was only that of responding to the demand of Makka's socio-economic organism, it would not have rejected and ousted him as Margoliouth recognizes it did.

Shortly after the appearance of Margoliouth's work C.H. Becker gave an avowedly economic explanation not so much of the rise of Islam as of the expansion of its political dominion over the neighbouring lands. Drawing attention to the instances of migration in a rather distant past of several south Arabian tribes to Madina, Syria and Mesopotamia (Iraq) and to the decline in the public waterworks in south Arabia, Becker suggested that the Arab expansion in the seventh Christian century "was the last great Semitic migration connected with the economical decline of Arabia." It was, according to him, "the final stage in a process of development extending over centuries." "Hunger and avarice, not religion," he wrote, "were the impelling forces for the new expansion," but Islam supplied "the essential unity and power" for the purpose. It gave the movement "a party cry and an organization."[1]

There are obvious weaknesses in Becker's theory. It totally neglects the economic and commercial growth of Makka on the eve of the rise of Islam, generalizes the not too well established economic decline of south Arabia in the distant past and applies it to the whole of the peninsula. It also ignores the long time-gap between the migration of the south Arabian tribes to the

1. *The Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. II (ed. H.M. Gwatkin and J.P. Whitney), Cambridge, 1913, pp. 330-332.

north and the Arab expansion of the seventh century. Nor does Becker adequately prove the premise that there was a sharp economic decline all over Arabia immediately prior to the rise of Islam. Moreover, this latter expansion was not strictly a migration. If it is true, as Becker states, that it was not the religion of Islam, but only its political sway, which was disseminated first, then it is equally true that that political sway was not a migration either. In the initial stage there was even the prohibition upon the Arabs' settling in the conquered lands. Becker's theory agrees, however, with Grimme's socialistic interpretation in one respect. It assumes all the tribes of the entire Arabian peninsula as the "have-nots" who preyed upon the lands of their neighbours, the "haves". It also savours of the assumption common to Muir, Margoliouth and others that the Prophet consciously and ambitiously aimed at political union of Arabia which "unity and power" provided the basis for the "new expansion."

Becker's suggestion of a general economic decline for Arabia on the eve of the rise of Islam does not appear to have found wide acceptance with the scholars. On the contrary the Wellhausen-Torrey-Margoliouth emphasis on the commercial growth of Makka formed the basis for further development in the process of economic interpretation. Thus writing shortly after Becker, H. Lammens added new dimensions to the theme. Inflating somewhat Margoliouth's allegation that 'Abd Al-Muṭṭalib used to sell the Zamzam water to the pilgrims Lammens stated that the privilege of *siqâyah* was utilized to make money by levying some charge for the use of the well of Zamzam by pilgrims.[1] More sepcifically, however, Lammens emphasized the commercial importance of Makka in western Arabia as a whole and stated that it enjoyed a position of supremacy over the neighbouring nomadic tribes because of the commercial and political acumen of the Quraysh as well as because of their military strength.[2] He also suggested that along with being a commercial centre Makka was also a financial centre where complex financial operations were carried out.[3] Also drawing attention to the fact that individual interests and selfishness were sometimes put above tribal considerations Lammens suggested that there was a decline in tribal solidarity and a corresponding growth of "individualisme" in the Makkan society on the

1. H. Lammens, *La Mecque à la Veille de l'Hégire*, Beirut, 1924, p. 55.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 177.
3. *Ibid*, p. 231.

eve of the rise of Islam.[1]

It needs to be pointed out at once that there is no valid authority for the suggestion that the pilgrims were required to pay a charge for their use of the well of Zamzam. In any case scholars have called in question the accurateness of many of the details suppiled by Lammens and his use of the sources. A recent writer has very aptly pointed out that Lammens "is a notoriously unreliable scholar whose name is rarely mentioned... without some expression of caution or disapproval." [2] Nevertheless Lammens's and his predecessors' suggestions have continued to influence the further attempts at socio-economic interpretations of the rise of Islam. Thus, reflecting the views of Wellhausen, Torrey and Margoliouth on the one hand, and those of Lammens on the other, R. Bell observed in the early thirties that (a) Makka "had risen in comparatively recent times to wealth and prosperity"; that (b) on the material side of life it had been "in touch with the lands of culture which lay just beyond the bounds of Arabia"; that (c) any influence which the spiritual life in those lands had exerted "had probably been negative, tending to undermine the old religion"; that (d) the new conditions of wealth "were playing havoc with the kindliness and equality of the old life" and that (e) Muḥammad (ﷺ), seeing his people "materially prosperous but spiritually backward" set himself "to transplant into their minds some of the 'knowledge' of things religious which those who dwelt in more enlightened lands possessed."[3] Emphasizing more particularly the two last mentioned points Bell wrote, while dealing specifically with the beginning of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) religious activity, that he, being impressed by man's dependence on divine bounty and "also no doubt by the decay of religion and the neglect by the Quraish, rendered proud and arrogant by the influx of the new wealth, of the kindly duties which in tribal life bound rich and poor together and mitigated its harshness", set "himself to revive the power of religion" for which purpose he turned to the "ideas of those who were already worshippers of one God."[4] Bell differed, however, from those who thought that Muḥammad (ﷺ) "ambitiously aimed at uniting Arabia by the

1. H. Lammens, *Le Berceau de l'Islam: l'Arabie Occidentale a la Veille de l'Hégrie*, Rome 1914, pp. 187 ff., cited in watt, *M. at M.*, p. 18.

2. Patricia Crone, *Meccan trade and the rise of Islam*, Oxford, 1987, p. 3.

3. R. Bell, "Who were the hanifs", *M.W.*, 1930, pp 121-122.

4. R. Bell, "The beginning of Muḥammad's religious activity" *T.G.U.O.S.*, VII, (pp. 16-24), p. 23.

worship of one god and obedience to himself" and stated that to assume that is "to confuse the result with the beginning"; for there could be no doubt, Bell emphasized, that from the first Muḥammad's (ﷺ) "object was a religious one, and religious it remained fundamentally to the end, inspite of the political manoeuvring in which he became involved, and the political success he ultimately gained."[1]

In thus emphasizing that the Prophet was not politically motivated from the first and that his object from first to last was fundamentally "religious" Bell comes nearer the truth; but in saying that Muḥammad (ﷺ) only or mainly attempted to solve the socio-economic and spiritual problems of his society, consequent upon the influx of new wealth, by reviving "the power of religion", Bell essentially echoes the views of his predecessors, particularly that of Margoliouth, which says that the Prophet sought to carry out his project of socio-economic reforms by means of a new religious system. Bell's other statements also are more or less a recapitulation of his predecessors' views. Thus the suggestions that Makka had recently risen to new wealth and prosperity, that the Quraysh had been in touch with the "lands of culture" which made them somewhat aware of the primitiveness of their society and culture, that the influence of such contact with those lands, particularly with Judaism and Christianity, had to some extent undermined paganism, that the Prophet only aimed at removing the anomaly between his people's material prosperity and spiritual backwardness and that in doing so he derived his ideas and inspiration from "those who were already worshippers of one God" (i.e. Jews and Christians), had each and all been made by Bell's prededcessors like Muir, Margoliouth, Torrey and others. Also the suggestion that the influx of new wealth had made the Quraysh selfish, proud and negligent of the "kindliness and equality of the old life" is clearly a paraphrasing of Lammens's view of the decline in tribal solidarity and growth of "individualisme".

Bell seems to base the last mentioned point on an analysis of the early passages of the Qur'ân. A number of these passages do of course denounce the Quraysh leaders' worldliness and emphasize the duty of kindness and consideration for the needy and the orphan. But there is no indication whatsoever in the Qur'ân that the trait disapproved of or the duty emphasized were new developments and concomitants of the supposedly new wealth.

1. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

Bell seems to think that since we hear so much about the pre-Islamic Arabs' hospitality, generosity and kindliness, it must be the "new" wealth which made the Quraysh proud, arrogant and oblivious of what he calls the "kindliness and equality of the old life." The conclusion is erroneous in two ways. It assumes that the Arab society of old was full only of virtues, free from all kinds of wrongs and injustices. But the pre-Islamic Arab society was not at all such a utopia. Instances are not wanting to show that the opposite traits of deception, greed, miserliness, pride, arrogance, perfidy and violation of others' rights and property were equally prevalent among them, particularly among that very section, the nomadic tribes, who were in no way likely to be affected by the supposedly new prosperity. Secondly, although there is no doubt that the international trade of the Makkan Quraysh had entered upon a new phase of expansion as a result of the Prophet's great-grandfather Hâshim's conclusion of a series of trade treaties with the Byzantine authorities, Yaman, Abyssinia, etc.,[1] that does not necessarily mean that there was a sudden influx of new and overwhelming wealth for the Makkan Quraysh setting at naught their traditional kindliness and equality. Nor are decline in generosity and growth in selfishness an invariable outcome of an increase of wealth and prosperity in any and every society. It is also to be noted that despite tribal solidarity, individual members of the tribe owned, bequeathed and succeeded to property, enjoyed a good deal of freedom in their personal affairs and not infrequently placed their individual interests above the interest of the tribe. In other words "selfishness" and "indivividualisme" of which Lammens speaks and Bell implies existed in the pre-Islamic Arab society in no small measure. At any rate, they cannot be said to be exclusively new developments coming with the new commercial expansion. The truth is that the Pre-Islamic Arab society, like perhaps every society in all times and climes, contained both good qualities and bad traits and the Qur'ân, like all previous divine revelations, approves of and encourages the former, and denounces and reforms the latter.

II. WATT'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE THEME

In the light of the above it will be easy to understand Watt's contribution to the stock of materialistic interpretations. The "fuller attention" which he

1. Patricia Crone, *op.cit.*, in fact goes to the other extreme of suggesting that the "conventional" view of Makka's trading activities "is based on classical accounts of the trade between south Arabia and the Mediterranean some six hundred years" prior to the rise of Islam!

claims to have paid to the material factors appears to consist in an elaboration of the above-noted views and theories of his predecessors on the one hand, and his adoption and incorporation of all the different views in his treatment of the subject, on the other. In elaborating his predecessors' views, however, Watt strains the facts and the texts to fit in with those views; and in incorporating them he seems to overlook the fact that some of the views run counter to some others.

To begin with, Watt acknowledgingly accepts Lammens's conclusion that Makka on the eve of the rise of Islam was not only a growing commercial centre but also an important financial centre where "financial operations of considerable complexity were carried out."[1] The commercial growth of Makka, it may be recalled, is emphasized also by Margoliouth, among others. Watt also accepts Lammens's view that the Quraysh enjoyed a primacy over the neighbouring tribes of west and west-central Arabia; but he rejects the latter's theory of the Quraysh's retaining "a mercenary army of black slaves" for maintaining and enforcing that primacy. Instead, Watt takes up Lammens's other point, that of political acumen or *ḥilm* for the Quraysh, and suggests that "the primacy of Quraysh did not rest on their military prowess as individuals" but "on the military strength they could bring to bear on any opponent". This military strength was that of a "confederacy" of the tribes which the Quraysh had "built up on the basis of their mercantile enterprises." For their caravans to Yaman, Syria and elsewhere, says Watt, the Quraysh required the services of a large number of nomads as guides, escorts and camelmen, and would therefore "pay a chief for safe-conduct through his territory, for water, and for other supplies." Thus did the Quraysh draw into their trading network the nomadic tribes who "quickly recognized on which side their bread was buttered." "This feeling of solidarity" with Makka was further strengthened by its chiefs' matrimonial alliances with the various tribes "and by the tribal chiefs' receiving an allocation of shares in the Meccan 'joint stock companies'."[2]

The expression "Joint-stock Company" for the Makkan traders, it may be recalled, is Margoliouth's.[3] He speaks, however, only of the "Meccan heads of houses". Watt extends it to include the neighbouring and nomadic tribes

1. Watt, *M. at M*, 3.
2. *Ibid.*, 10-11.
3. *Supra*, p. 96. Also Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, 30-31.

as well. He does not, however, cite any specific instance of "the tribal chiefs' receiving an allocation of shares in the Meccan 'joint stock companies'." In view of the facts that the Makkan chiefs like 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib concluded marriage alliances with some of the neighbouring tribes and that there were occasional military alliances between Quraysh and such tribes, the possibility cannot be ruled out that some of those tribes might occasionally have come forward to taking part in the trade caravans of Makka, though we should always remember that nomadism and commercialism are strange bedfellows. In any case, it is far-fetched to conclude that such occasional joint trade ventures or military alliances constituted a "confederacy" of the tribes. Whatever might have been the nature of such cooperation of the tribes it is simply antithetical to suppose that such an alliance or 'confederacy' could be an instrument for the Quraysh to bring their military strength to bear on those very neighbouring tribes.

Watt also links up the commercial activities of the Quraysh with their inter-clan rivalry for power and leadership at Makka and states: "Within the commercial community of Mecca there was a continuous struggle for power." And although he does not directly say that the Prophet's mission was a phase in that traditional struggle for power and leadership, he in effect suggests this by saying that "since from the first Muḥammad was something of a statesman, it is necessary to consider at least the chief points."[1] As these chief points or "political groupings within the Quraysh" Watt refers to Quṣayy's snatching the control of Makka from Banû Khuzâ'ah, the struggle between his successors — Banû 'Abd al-Dâr and Banû 'Abd Manâf — for the offices and functions connected with the Ka'ba and administration of Makka, their forming two rival groups called *Al-Aḥlâf* and *Al-Muṭayyabûn*, and to their ultimately coming to a compromise over the issue.[2] Watt further relates this development with the subsequent formation of *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl*.[3]

Speaking about the "control of affairs in Mecca", however, Watt belittles the importance of the traditional offices of *al-liwâ', al-siqâyah, al-rifâdah,* etc., though, reflecting the views of Margoliouth and Lammens, particularly of the latter, he observes that the office of *al-siqâyah* offered opportunities for making money, that "there was some charge for the use of the well of

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, 4.
2. *Ibid.*, 4-5.
3. *Ibid.*, 6-8.

Zamzam by the pilgrims."[1] Next it is observed that the influence of the individual in the affairs of the city depended on his personal qualifications and the power of his clan which depended on its wealth. According to Watt, Banû 'Abd Shams and Banû Makhzûm were the leading clans of Makka at the time of the Prophet's mission and that 'Abû Sufyân of the former clan dominated Makkan policy at the time because of his personal qualities of diplomacy and commercial and financial shrewdness. Watt even compares the position of 'Abû Sufyân at Makka with that of Pericles at Athens.[2]

More notably Watt extends the inter-clan rivalry of the Quraysh for power and leadership at Makka into the field of their international trade and assumes a keen inter-tribal commercial rivalry in that sphere too. He observes that the "political groupings" within "the commercial community" were "in turn involved in relations with the Arab tribes with whom the Makkan caravans came into contact, and with the great powers to whose markets they carried their goods."[3] In fact his suggestion of a "confederacy" of the tribes, mentioned above, is presented as an illustration of this relationship. The same theme of inter-clan commercial rivalry being carried to the great powers he attempts to illustrate by alleging that at the time of Abrahah's invasion 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib attempted to obtain favourable business terms for himself from the Abyssinian invader.[4] The same assumption underlies his further assumption that Muḥammad (ﷺ) in his youth was ousted from the field of the most profitable business operations.[5] And it is the same assumption of inter-clan commercial rivalry which Watt attempts to elaborate in connection with his theory about the *Ḥarb al-Fijâr* and the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl*.[6]

That theory about the *Ḥarb al-Fijâr* and the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* will be dealt with in a subsequent chapter.[7] The unreasonableness of his assumption about 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's role during Abrahah's campaign will also be pointed out later.[8] Also the speciousness and self-contradictory nature of his assumption

1. *Ibid.*, 8-9.
2. *Ibid.*, 9.
3. *Ibid.*, 4.
4. *Infra*, pp. 138-139.
5. *Infra*, Ch. VIII, sec.II.
6. Watt, *M. at M.*, 6-8, 14-16.
7. See Chap. IX.
8. *Infra*, pp. 139-140.

that the Prophet in his youth was ousted from the most profitable business operations will be noted in its place.[1] Here some basic weaknesses of the assumption of inter-clan commercial rivalry may be noted. The instances of "political groupings", namely, Quṣayy's ousting of Banû Khuzâ'ah from Makka, the struggle for power and offices between Banû 'Abd al-Dâr and Banû 'Abd Manâf, the formation of *Al-Aḥlâf* and *Al-Muṭayyabûn*, etc., were not at all an outcome of commercial rivalry among them, but of the struggle for the offices connected with the adminstration of the Ka'ba and the town of Makka. Even that dispute was settled by a compropmise. In fact before Hâshim ibn 'Abd Manâf's conclusion of a series of trade treaties with Yaman, the Byzantine authorities, Abyssinia and a number of Arab tribes, which was posterior to the above mentioned struggle, the Quraysh had not really entered the field of international trade on any mentionable scale. Also the glimpses that we get of the Arab tribes' cooperation or participation in the Makkan trade ventures since Hâshim's time do not in any way give the impression that those were commercial alliances effected by one group of Quraysh clans against another group. Although within the city of Makka the various Quraysh clans vied with one another for power and influence, there did not exist any commercial war, so to say, between their two main groups, nor did they ever carry their supposed commercial rivalry to the foreign courts and markets, nor to the tribes. Such a conduct on the part of the Quraysh clans would have been suicidal for their commercial interests as a whole, particularly in their relations with the tribes and for the safety of the Makkan caravans through tribal territories. There is no instance of one group of Quraysh clans ever making an alliance with a foreign power or with the nomadic tribes against another group, neither for commercial nor for political purposes. The instance of 'Uthmân ibn al-Ḥuwayrith, who attempted to seize political power of Makka with Byzantine help, was a case of personal ambition and, as Watt himself recognizes, 'Uthmân was disowned and abandoned by his own clan, Banû Asad.[2]

As regards Watt's treatment of the "control of affairs" in Makka, it is clearly geared to relegating Banû Hâshim, the Prophet's clan, into the background. That is why the traditional offices and functions in connection with the Ka'ba and the city administration are belittled. At the same time the

1. *Infra*, pp. 189-190.
2. Watt, *M. at M.*, 15, 19.

function of *al-siqâyah,* which was held by Banû Hâshim, is said to offer only the opportunities of making money from the pilgrims. This insinuation, together with the allegation against 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib in connection with Abrahah's invasion are intended mainly to bring into disrepute Banû Hâshim. For the same purpose no mention whatsoever is made of the very signifcant fact that for more than half a century till at least five years after the Abyssinian invasion 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was the virtual chief of Makka and dominated both its internal and external scene. Even after his death Banû Hâshim were very prominent in the city affairs, besides exercising the traditional functions in connection with the Ka'ba, as is illustrated by their successfully withstanding the opposition of all the clans combined till at least the seventh year of the Prophet's mission. None of these facts finds mention in Watt's description of the control of affairs in Makka.

It is indisputable that the Quraysh and Makka itself owed their importance and position mainly to the existence in it of the Ka'ba which all the Arabs venerated and to which they paid visits and made annual pilgrimage. Makka's internal trade as a whole and much of her external trade were bound up with that House of God. Surely, therefore, the administration of its affairs and the task of managing the annual occasion of pilgrimage, particularly maintaining the supply of water and food during that season, formed the most important part of the city's affairs. This important and all-absorbing function in the city's civic life belonged to Banû Hashim by common agreement of the Quraysh. The importance of that position would be all the more clear if it is remembered that in ancient and early medieval times those who held the helm of religious affairs were considered the highest and most important group in society. The administration and management of "religious affairs", which never were exclusively "religious" in the narrow sense of the term, was the most important aspect of the affairs of the bodypolitic. Watt simply ignores these facts in his treatment of the control of affairs in Makka.

Conversely, he focusses attention mainly on the importance of *mala'* or assembly of the city-elders, which was in fact *nadwah*, one of the traditional five-or six-fold divisions in the administration of Makka's affairs. In stressing the function of *mala'* Watt further states that the importance and influence of a clan in the city's affairs depended on its wealth and the intelligence of its individual members. Wealth and intelligence of course counted, as they do count in every society in all ages; but if Banû 'Abd Shams and their allies

played important roles in the assembly of elders, this was so not because they only possessed wealth and their individual members possessed the qualities of diplomacy and commercial and financial shrewdness, but mainly because, according to the compromise between the *Aḥlâf* and the *Muṭayyabûn*, the functions like *al-nadwah* and *al-liwâ'* were assigned to Banû 'Abd Shams. And it is worth stressing that no decision could be adopted and acted upon unless all the clans unanimously consented to it. Watt notes this rule of unanimity; but he would have done better if he had also noted in this connection that when 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib went out openly to negotiate with Abrahah, he must have done so with the unanimous consent of all the clans; for he simply could not have taken such a momentous step concerning the city's life on his own account. Finally, Watt inflates the position of 'Abû Sufyân obviously at the cost of the other Makkan leaders. Far from being the Pericles of Makka, 'Abû Sufyân does not emerge on the scene prominently till the Prophet's migration to Madina. Before that event the scene of opposition had been dominated by leaders like 'Abû Jahl, 'Utbah ibn Rabî'ah, Al-Walîd ibn Mughîrah and even 'Abû Lahab of Banû Hâshim, not at all by 'Abû Sufyân. In all these respects Watt's treatment of the control of affairs in Makka is clearly partial and tendentious.

But to return to Watt's economic interpretation. Within the framework of a supposed inter-clan commercial rivalry within the Quraysh, Watt adopts and elaborates the other ideas of his predecessors, particularly the suggestions (a) that the commercial growth and influx of the new wealth played havoc with the old kindliness and generosity, giving rise to selfishness and individualism, (b) that this growing individualism together with contact with the outer world and with Judaism and Christianity led to a decline in the pagan religion and also in tribal solidarity; (c) that the anomaly thus occurring between the new material growth and the primitive spiritual and moral order needed to be readjusted; (d) that in seeking to effect that readjustment Muḥammad conceived a religious solution for essentially socio-economic problems and (e) that in doing so he derived his ideas from Judaism and Christianity.

These views of his predecessors Watt works out in his discussion on the social, moral, intellectual and religious background[1] of the rise of Islam and also in his treatment of what he calls the relevance of the early message of

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, 16-24.

the Qur'ân to the contemporary situation.[1] In discussing the social background Watt attempts to show that there was a decline in tribal solidarity and a corresponding growth of individualism. He states that though the concept of tribal solidarity "applied in general to the city of Mecca", it was "never absolute. The members of the tribe were not automatons, but human beings prone to selfishness — or what Lammens calls 'individualisme'; it would only be natural if sometimes they put private interests above those of the tribe."[2] Further, though "tribal solidarity continued to govern the actions of the best people, yet a certain individualism" had made its appearance in their thinking. This tendency to individualism was fostered by the circumstances of commercial life in Makka. That is why, points out Watt, 'Abû Lahab differed form his clan and opposed the Prophet, the "opposition to 'Uthmân ibn al-Ḥuwayrith came from within his own clan" and many became the Prophet's followers "despite the disapproval of their clans, even of their parents."[3] At the same time there appeared "an interesting new phenomenon in Mecca — the appearance of a sense of unity based on common material interests" so that business partnerships sometimes "cut across clan relationships." It was this sense of common material interests "that led the Aḥlâf and the Muṭayyabûn to compose their quarrel. It was this again that led to the forgetting of rivalries and the formation of a 'coalition government' after the defeat at Badr." The significance of all this was that the bond of kinship by blood was weakened and an opportunity was revealed "for establishing a wider unity on a new basis."[4] "If we are to look for an economic change correlated with the origin of Islam", concludes Watt,[5]

"then it is here that we must look... In the rise of Mecca to wealth and power we have a movement from a nomadic economy to a mercantile and capitalist economy. By the time of Muḥammad, however, there had been no readjustment of the social, moral, intellectual and religious attitudes of the community. These were still the attitudes appropriate to a nomadic community, for the most part. The tension felt by Muḥammad and some of his contemporaries was doubtless due ultimately to this contrast between men's conscious attitudes and the economic basis of their life."

And more or less the same ideas are advanced in his discussion on the

1. *Ibid.*, 72-96.
2. *Ibid.*, 18.
3. *Ibid.*, 10.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*, 19-20.

pre-Islamic "moral ideal"[1] and the "religious and intellectual background".[2] Under these sub-headings Watt states, in sum, that (a) "it is generally agreed that the archaic pagan religion" was on the decline;[3] that (b) the moral ideal of *murû'ah* which found expression through generosity, hospitality, fidelity, etc., and which was the same as "tribal humanism" also was on the decline because of the growth of individualism (i.e. selfishness and niggardliness)[4] and that (c) the "premonitions of monotheism among the Arabs must have been due mainly to Christian and Jewish influences."[5]

Needless to point out how closely does Watt reflect in the above mentioned statements the views of his predecessors, particularly those of Margoliouth and Bell. The question of Christian and Jewish influences and of the decay of the pagan religion are dealt with separately.[6] Here the untenability of the main assumption, namely, that the commercial progress of Makka led to the growth there of individualism which in turn corroded clan solidarity and faded the old ideal of *murû'ah* may be pointed out.

In the first place, if a sense of unity based on common material interests led the *'Aḥlâf* and the *Muṭayyabûn* to compose their differences, as Watt rightly notes, and if the same sense led the Quraysh clans to form what is called a 'coalition government' after the defeat at Badr, then that sense was in no way a "new phenomenon", however "interesting" it might appear to Watt. For an era of about a century spans the two events, on the simple calculation that the battle of Badr took place when the Prophet was about fifty-five years old, that he was born when his father 'Abd Allah was some twenty-five years old, and the latter was born when his father 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib ibn Hâshim was about the same age and that the compromise between the *Aḥlâf* and the *Muṭayyabûn* was made when Hâshim was a young man. Also it should not be overlooked that the commercial expansion of the Quraysh took place after that event and mainly as a result of Hâshim's wise policy and leadership. The sense of unity based on common material interests, or rather the common sense, to which Watt refers, was thus neither a new deve-

1. *Ibid.*, 20-23.
2. *Ibid.*, 23-29.
3. *Ibid.*, 23.
4. *Ibid.*, 20, 24-25.
5. *Ibid.*, 27.
6. *Infra*, ch. XI.

lopment at the Prophet's time nor did it arise out of the commercial growth. Such common sense or pragmatism may be said to be characteristic of people living in hard and desert conditions in general, like the Arabs, and of the Quraysh in particular.

Secondly, if the sense of unity based on common material interests prevailed over the Quraysh during Hâshim's time as well as after the defeat at Badr, then it is simply unreasonable to assume that the same Quraysh clans carried their mutual and petty rivalries inside Makka into the sphere of their international trade — to the foreign courts and to the nomadic tribes. The same sense of common material interests must have dictated to them the advisability of not doing so. And, as already pointed out, there is no instance of a Quraysh clan ever concluding a trade or military pact with any foreign power or nomadic tribe against any of their own clans.

Thirdly, in saying that business partnerships sometimes "cut across clan relationships" and also in citing this fact as an instance of the growth of individualism Watt seems to labour under a fundamental mistake. He seems to think and suggest that previously to this development business activities of the Quraysh followed clan relationships. This was never so. Business activities do not appear at any time to have been carried on by the tribe or clan as such, but by its individual members as individuals and not in the name of or on behalf of his clan. This was so in both the spheres of internal and external trades. A trade caravan going to a foreign land consisted of a number of individual traders, almost always from different clans, together with their servants and equipage. It was a company only in the sense of the 'companionship' of the traders, rather than in the sense of an amalgamation of their individual capitals into a 'joint stock". It was also a joint venture in the sense of their travelling together for safety and other advantages. Each individual trader, however, did business with his own capital and with that of his absentee partners who paid their capital to him for the purpose. And just as individuals from different clans could conclude marriage alliances, similarly they could and did enter into business partnerships without infringing clan solidarity. This was no new phenomenon and there was no question of "cutting" across clan relationships in such deals.

Fourthly, Watt, following Lammens, considers selfishness or one's giving priority to one's own interest as coterminous with individualism. And as illustrations of this individualism Watt cites 'Abû Lahab's going against his

clan and opposing the Prophet, 'Uthmân ibn al-Ḥuwayrith's taking a stand different from that of his clan and the early Muslims' embracing Islam despite the disapproval of their clans and families. These illustrations are faulty in at least one respect. Such divergent and conflicting conducts as that of 'Abû Lahab on the one hand in opposing Islam and that of the early Muslims in embracing it on the other could not have been due to the same phenomenon or the same type of individualism. 'Abû Lahab and 'Uthmân ibn al-Ḥuwayrith no doubt acted in pursuance of selfishness or self-interest; but the early Muslims, whatever might have been their considerations, did not act in pursuance or in furtherance of their selfishness or material interests. Even if their action is regarded as symptomatic of individualism, surely the Lammens-Watt definition cannot be applied to it. Its source and inspiration must have been different from and unconnected with commercialism and the influx of the new wealth. In other words, their individualism was the same as it existed among the Arabs since time immemorial.

Thus the premise that the commercial progress led to the rise of individualism weakening clan solidarity and the ideal of *murû'ah* thus providing the opportunity for reorganizing the society on a new basis is wrong. The extent of individualism discernible at the time was inherent in the Arab tribal society since antiquity. So did selfishness, niggardliness, cruelty and carelessness to the needy and the indigent exist side by side with generosity, hospitality and fidelity. There was no decline as such in clan solidarity, nor any perceptible and immediate need for providing an alternative to the system of social solidarity. Also the statement that in the rise of Makka "we have a movement from a nomadic economy to a mercantile and capitalist economy" is specious and a simplification of a rather complex situation. Trading activities and commercialism side by side with nomadism are known to exist in Arabia since time immemorial.[1] At any rate, the commercial agreements concluded some one hundred years before the Prophet's time by his great-great-grandfather Hâshim with a number of the neighbouring countries and nomadic tribes presuppose a good deal of commercial tradition and experience indicative in no way of a new movement from nomadism to commercialism. In fact Watt, besides attempting to justify the Margoliouth-Bell thesis that the new situation at Makka called for a re-adjustment of the

1. Once again we may recall here Patricia Crone's thesis that the classical accounts of Arabia's commercial activities relate to a period som six hundred years prior to the rise of Islam.

old socio-religious and moral attitudes, also appears to incorporate some elements of Grimme's socialistic interpretation. Thus, in trying to show the relevance of the early Qur'ânic messages to the contemporary situation,[1] or rather in justifying his socio-economic interpretation, Watt not only reiterates and elaborates the themes of individualism and the decay of social solidarity etc., but also further states that though it is unlikely that there had been any increase in absolute poverty in Makka due to the commercial growth, the "gap between the rich and the poor" or "between the rich, not so rich and poor" had increased[2] and that Islam "drew its support not from the bottom layers of the social scale, but from the middle... It was not so much a struggle between 'haves' and 'have-nots' as between 'haves' and 'nearly hads'."[3] This is unmistakably reminiscent of Grimme's socialistic interpretation with a slight modification. All these, however, relate to the early phase of the Prophet's mission and the contents of the early Qur'ânic passages. These and other sayings of Watt in this connection are therefore discussed at a later stage in this work.[4]

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, 72-96.
2. *Ibid.*, 72.
3. *Ibid.*, 96.
4. See Ch. XXIV.

SECTION II

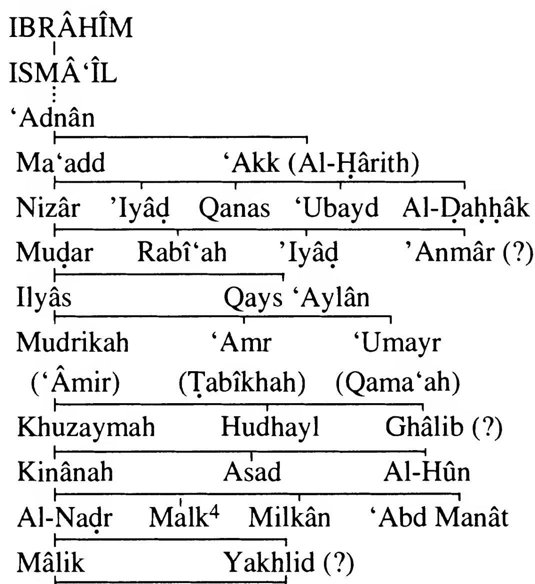
BIRTH, BOYHOOD AND YOUTH

CHAPTER V

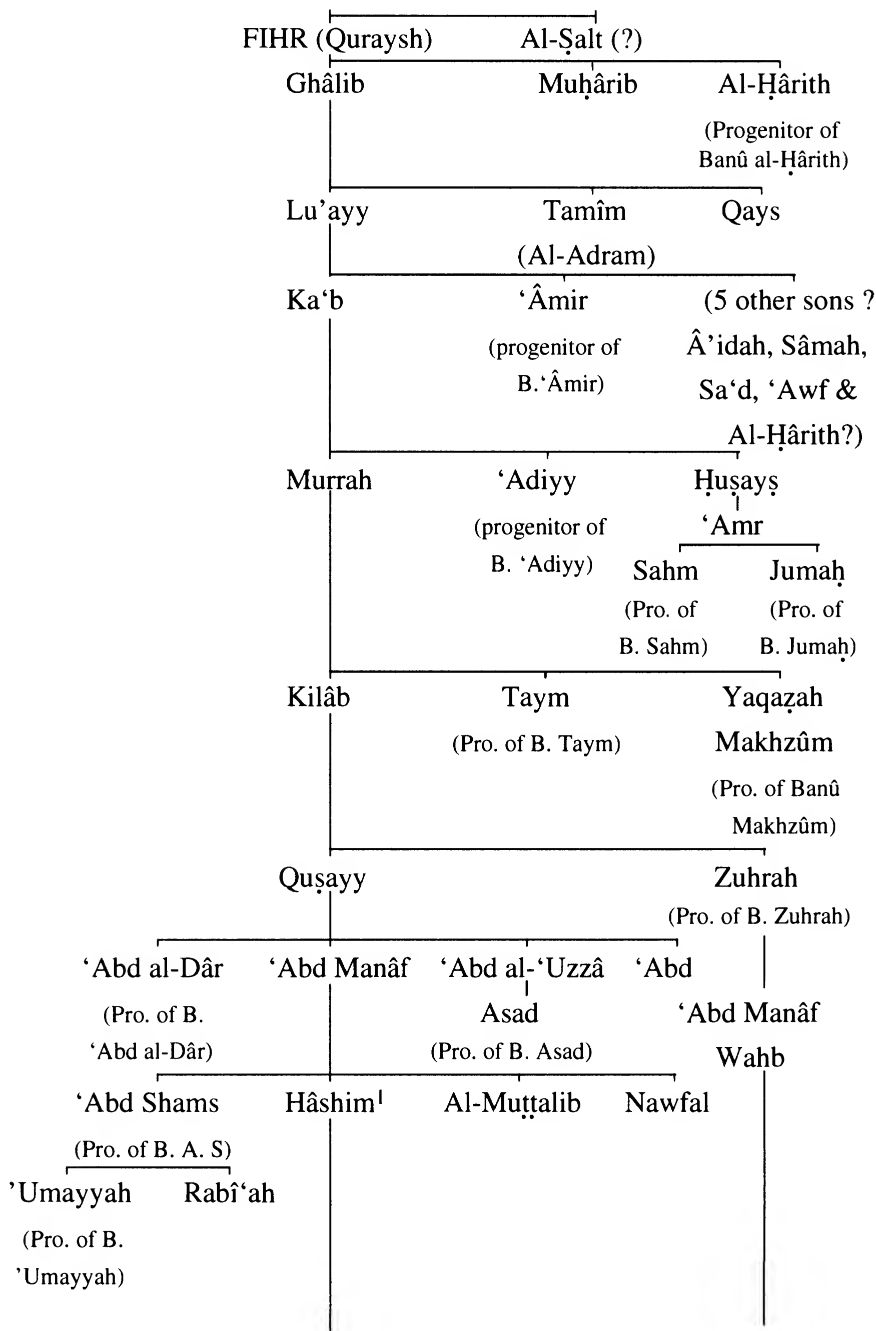
FAMILY BACKGROUND, BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

I. FAMILY BACKGROUND

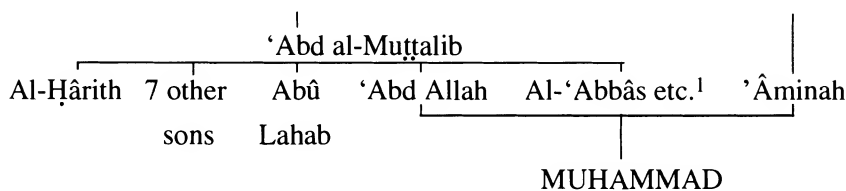
Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) was born of the noblest family of the noblest clan, Banû Hâshim, of the noble Quraysh tribe of Makka.[1] There was no Quraysh clan at Makka with whom he was not closely related by blood or marriage.[2] His father 'Abd Allah was a son of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, son of Hâshim, son of 'Abd Manâf, son of Quṣayy, son of Kilâb, son of Murrah, son of Ka'b,etc., going back to Prophets Ismâ'îl and Ibrâhîm (p.b. on them). His mother 'Âminah was the daughter of Wahayb, son of 'Abd Manâf, son of Zuhrah son of Kilâb, son of Murrah, etc., leader of the Zuhrah clan. Thus the ancestries of both the parents met in the person of Kilâb ibn Murrah. The ancestral tree stands as follows:[3]



1. *Bukhârî.* nos. 3491, 3492; *Musnad,* I., 210; IV, 107, 166; Ibn Sa'd, I., 20-23.
2. *Bukhârî.* nos. 3497, 4818; *Musnad,* I., 229; Ibn Sa'd, I., 24.
3. Ibn Hishâm, I., 92-97, 103-104; Al-Ṭabarî (*Târîkh*), II, 239-276 (I / 1073-1122); Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusî, *Jamharat Ansâb al-'Arab*, Beirut, 1403 / 1983, 9-15. The Names in the chart upto 'Abd Manâf are, from left to right, written in the order mentioned by Ibn Ḥazm. They are not necessarily in the order of their dates of birth.
4. Ibn Ḥazm specifically notes that the name is Malk, not Mâlik.



1. Hâshim had some other children by other wives.



Fihr, the tenth in the line of descent from 'Adnân, was known as Quraysh. It was after him that all his descendants came to be known as Quraysh or the Quraysh tribe. The sixth in the line of descent from Fihr, Quṣayy, was the great-grandfather of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the Prophet's grandfather. It was Quṣayy, as mentioned earlier, who had settled the Quraysh at Makka, established their complete control over it and had combined in his hands the five traditional functions of the Makkan bodypolitic. It has also been noted how these functions were subsequently shared by Quṣayy's descendants, Banû 'Abd Manâf and Banû 'Abd al-Dâr and how Hâshim, the Prophet's great-grandfather, besides exercising the functions of *al-Siqâyah* and *al-Rifâdah*, developed the international trade of the Quraysh as a whole by concluding a series of trade treaties with the Bayzantine authorities and Persia in the north and with the rulers of Yaman and Abyssinia in the south. He had also concluded trade pacts with the Arab tribes lying on the Quraysh's trade routes.[2]

In connection with one of his trade journeys Hâshim visited the market of Yathrib (Madina) where he was captivated by the natural charms and commanding personality of a lady whom he saw supervising her employees in buying and selling her merchandize. She was Salamah bint 'Amr of Banû 'Adiyy ibn al-Najjâr. She had previously been married to 'Uḥayḥah ibn al-

1. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib had 15 sons and 5 daughters by 6 wives. They are: By Safiyyah of Banû 'Âmir b. Ṣa'ṣ'ah—Al-Ḥârith. By Fâṭimah bint 'Amr of Banû Makhzûm—Al-Zubayr, Abû Ṭâlib, 'Abd al-Ka'bah and 'Abd Allah; and five daughters, Bayḍâ', 'Umaymah, 'Arwa, 'Âtikah and Barrah. By Lubna of Banû Khuzâ'ah—'Abû Lahab ('Abd al-'Uzzâ). By Hâlah of Banû Zuhrah (sister of 'Âminah)—Al-Muqawwim, Hajal or Khajal, Al-Mughîrah and Ḥamzah. By Nutaylah of Banû Rabî'ah ibn Nizâr—Darar, Qatham and Al-'Abbâs. By Mun'amitah of Banû Khuzâ'ah—Ghaydaq and Mus'ab.

Of the daughters Al-Bayḍâ' was married to Kurayz ibn Rabî'ah of Banû 'Abd Shams; 'Umaymah to Hajir ibn Ri'âb al-Asadî; 'Âtikah to 'Umayyah ibn al-Mughîrah of Banû Makhzûm; Safiyyah was first married to Ḥarb ibn 'Umayyah, of Banû 'Umayyah ('Abû Sufyân's father) and on Ḥarb's death to 'Awwâm ibn Khuwaylid of Banû Asad (Khadîjah's brother). Barrah was married to 'Abd al-Asad ibn Hilâl of Banû Makhzûm.

2. See *supra*, pp. 38-39.

Julah but was now divorced. Hâshim proposed to marry her. Because of her nobility and importance among her own people she stipulated that she should have freedom to manage her own affairs. Hâshim agreed, married her and allowed her to stay at Madina to look after her business and other affairs. There she in the course of time gave birth to a son for Hâshim. The child was named Shaybah. Naturally, Hâshim left the child to grow up there under the care of his mother, intending to bring him to Makka when he would be stepping into boyhood. That time nearly approached when Hâshim, all of a sudden, died at Ghaza (then in Syria, now in Palestine) where he had gone on a trade travel. It may be recalled that it was Hâshim who had also introduced the two principal yearly trade journeys for the Quraysh, once in the summer towards Syria and the Byzantine lands, and again in the winter towards Yaman and Abyssinia.[1]

The functions of *al-Siqâya* and *al-Rifâdah* now devolved on Hâshim's younger brother Al-Muṯṯalib. He brought his deceased brother's son Shaybah from Madina to Makka at the appropriate time. When he came with the boy the people jokingly remarked that the boy was Al-Muṯṯalib's slave,—'Abd al-Muṯṯalib. "Hell on you", shouted out al-Muṯṯalib to the crowd saying, "He is my brother's son."[2] From that time, however, the boy's original name receded into the background and he was popularly called 'Abd al-Muṯṯalib.

Like his brother Hâshim, Al-Muṯṯalib also exercised the functions of *al-Siqâyah* and *al-Rifâdah* with credit and generosity. Indeed he proved to be so generous in the discharge of those functions that the Quraysh used to call him *al-Fayḍ* or the Generous[3]. After exercising those functions for a considerable time he died at Radman in Yaman where he had gone on a trade mission. His death was quickly followed by the death of his remaining brother Nawfal.[4]

'Abd al-Muṯṯalib was by now a grown-up young man. He was extremely handsome, to which he added a commanding presence, a penetrating intelligence and other qualities of a born leader. He now succeeded to the offices of *al-Siqâyah* and *al-Rifâdah.* Under his management these two functions became the two most important public activities of Makkan life. His most

1. *Supra*, p. 39.
2. Ibn Hishâm, I., 138.
3. *Ibid.*, 137.
4. *Ibid.*, 139.

important achievement, as already mentioned,[1] was the re-excavation of the Zamzam well which brought both prosperity and influence for the Quraysh as a whole.

But he had one want. He had at the time of re-excavating the Zamzam well only one son; and he earnestly prayed to Allah to bless him with at least ten sons. Tradition says that 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was so fervent in his yearning for a large number of sons that he vowed to Allah to sacrifice one for Him if he was blessed with at least ten. Partly in pursuance of this yearning he married successively four wives, one from Banû 'Âmir, two from Banû Khuzâ'ah and the fourth, Fâṭimah bint 'Amr ibn 'Â'id, from Banû Makhzûm. Allah granted his prayer. He had in the course of time ten sons (and more). The tenth and till then the youngest was 'Abd Allah, by his Makhzûmite wife Fâṭimah. 'Abd Allah was an exceptionally handsome boy of perfect health and constitution. As he grew up 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib proceeded to fulfil his vow. He took all his sons to the Ka'ba and drew the lots in the usual manner for selecting the son to be sacrificed. The lot fell on 'Abd Allah, the youngest and dearest to his father.[2]

'Abd al-Muṭṭalib forthwith proceeded to fufil his vow lest he should be overtaken by love and affection. But opposition came from the Quraysh leaders, the fiercest being from the leader of Banû Makhzûm, Al-Mughîrah ibn 'Abd Allah ibn 'Amr ibn Makhzûm, because 'Abd Allah was the son of their daughter, Fâṭimah bint 'Amr ibn 'Â'id.[3] Ultimately 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was obliged to seek the advice of a famous lady-soothsayer of Yathrib (Madina) to find a solution for the difficulty arising out of his pact with Allah on the one hand and the determind opposition of the Quraysh leaders on the other. The lady suggested to him that he draw lots by placing 10 camels on one side and 'Abd Allah on the other, asking 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib to continue doing so, eash time adding 10 camels to the number, till the lot fell on them. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib returned home, went to the Ka'ba and drew lots as advised.

1. *Supra*, pp. 40-41.

2. Ibn Hishâm, I., 153.

3. A parallel to the Mukhzûmite role in the matter happened subsequently when they wanted to persecute 'Abû Salamah of their clan on his conversion to Islam but 'Abû Ṭâlib gave him protection on the ground that he was 'Abû Ṭâlib's sister's son. Still subsequently the Prophet ruled that a son belongs to his mother's family too (*Bukhârî*, no. 6762: إبن أخت القوم منهم). See also *Musnad*, II, 119, 171-172, 180, 201, 222, 231, 246, 275, 276-277; IV, 396, 430: *Tirmidhî*, no. 3901; *Al-Nasâ'î*, nos. 2610, 2611; *Al-Dârimî*, II, pp. 243-244.

When the number of camels reached 100, the lot fell on them. But 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was strictly scrupulous and conscientious. He wanted to be quite sure about Allah's intention in the matter. Hence he drew the lots two more times; and again each time these fell on the camels. Thus was 'Abd Allah's life redeemed by sacrificing 100 camels instead.[1] It is for this well-known incident that the Prophet subsequently used to say that he was the son of two sacrifices, Prophet Ismâ'îl and 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib.

Undoutedly it was wise on Al-Mughîrah's part to have come forward to save the life of their daughter's son 'Abd Allah. Tragically, however, it was equally a folly on the part of Al-Mughirah's son, Al-Walîd, to lead a little subsequently the opposition to 'Abd Allah's son.[2] But though Al-Walîd thus reversed his father's policy, there could be no reversal of the fact that the bloods of both Banû Hâshim and Banû Makhzûm flowed equally well in 'Abd Allah's veins. And to these two streams was soon joined a third stream of blood, that of Banû Zuhrah. For 'Abd Allah soon bloomed into full youth. He was now in his early twenties, and 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was in search of a suitable bride for his son. His eyes fell on 'Âminah, daughter of Wahb ibn 'Abd Manâf, leader of Banû Zuhrah. The marriage between 'Abd Allah and 'Âminah took place in due course. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib himself had a little earlier married her cousin Hâlah, daughter of Wahb's brother Wahayb ibn 'Abd Manâf.

Scarcely had these happy occasions ended when the Makkan and Arab society in general were stirred to their depth by Abrahah's invasion of Makka and the Ka'ba.[3] The disastrous end of Abrahah's campaign against the Ka'ba is significant in at least three important respects. Far from diminishing the importance of the Ka'ba, its importance and prestige now soared high with the Arabs, and along with it the prestige of the Quraysh also increased in the eyes of the Arabs in general. Secondly, the event illustrated and confirmed 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's leadership of the Makkan society and his position as the most important functionary in connection with The House. Thirdly, it provides the sheet-anchor in the life-story of the Prophet, and therefore in the history of Islam; for he was born in "The Year of the Elephant".

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 154-155.
2. *Infra*, Ch. XXV.
3. *Supra*, pp. 41-42.

II. BIRTH AND INFANCY

'Abd Allah, the Prophet's father, had been married to 'Âminah less than a year before the occurrence of the Elephant. The couple was not destined, however, to enjoy conjugal life for long. After living with his wife for some time 'Abd Allah went on a trade journey to Syria and fell ill on his return trip. The caravan left him with his father's maternal relatives of Banu 'Adiyy ibn al-Najjâr of Yathrib (Madina) where 'Abd Allah died of that illness shortly afterwards. He was hardly 25 years old when he died.[1] At that time 'Âminah had conceived Muḥammad (ﷺ) barely for a few months. 'Abd Allah was buried at Madina. Thus the Prophet became an orphan before his birth.

The sources generally agree in saying that the Prophet was born in Rabî' I, on a Monday in The Year Of the Elephant.[2] It is now an established fact that the Prophet's *hijrah* to Madina took place in 622 A.C. when he was in the 53rd year of his life. Calculating backward from this latter year and assuming that 53 lunar years equal 51 solar years, his birth would fall in 571 A.C. There is a difference of opinion, however, about the exact day of Rabî' I. For instance, Ibn Isḥâq puts it on the 12th; Ibn Sa'd, on the authority of Al-Wâqidî, states it to be the 10th, while Mas'ûdî puts it on the 8th.[3] Further calculations have been made on the basis of this period between the 8th and the 12th of Rabî' I and the fact of Monday being the day on which the Prophet was born. According to minute astronomical calculations carried out by Maḥmûd Pâshâ al-Falakî of Egypt, the only Monday between 8 and 12 Rabî' I of 571 A.C. falls on the 9th.[4] Accepting this calculation a number of scholars state that the Prophet was born on Monday, 9 Rabî' I, corresponding to 20 April 571 A.C. There are others, however, who assume that 53 lunar years would equal 52 years. Hence they place the birth-date in March / April 570 A.C.[5] But the former view appears more reasonable.

1. Ibn Sa'd, I., 99.

2. Ibn Hishâm, I., 158; Ibn Sa'd, I., 100-101; *Tirmidhî*, no. 3619; *Musnad*, IV., 215; 'Abû al-Fidâ', II., 5.

3. Ibn Hishâm, I., 158; Ibn Sa'd, I., 100; Al-Mas'ûdî, *Târikh*, Cairo, 1346 H., 398.

4. Maḥmûd Pâshâ al-Falakî, *Natâ'ij al-Afhâm Fî Taqwîm al-'Arab Qabla al-Islâm*, etc., Dâr al-Bashâ'ir al-Islâmiyah, Beirut, First print, 1407 / 1986, (tr. from the French into Arabic by Aḥmad Zakî Afindî), specially pp. 32-35.

5. Holding the former view are Shiblî Nu'mânî, *Sîrat Al-Nabî* (Urdu text), Vol. I., Azam- =

It is related that before the birth of her child 'Âminah had been instructed in a dream or by an angel to name the child, when born, as Muḥammad (or Aḥmad)[1] and that 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the grandfather, also had a similar dream.[2] Such dreams are not at all unlikely— many even toady experience dreams that prove remarkably true. Also similar dreams are mentioned in the Bible in connection with the birth of Jesus and other prophets. Be that as it may, there is no doubt that the Prophet-to-be was named Muḥammad almost immediately after his birth and that he was alternatively called 'Aḥmad' since his very early days.[3] There are also reports of some miraculous and supernatural occurrences accompanying the birth of the Prophet.[4]

It was the custom of the noble and respectable families of Makka at that time to entrust their new-born babes to the care of suitable nurses for suckling and bringing them up. For a few days after his birth Muḥammad (ﷺ) was suckled by Thuwaybah, a female slave of 'Abû Lahab's, an uncle of the Prophet. It is reported that 'Abû Lahab was so happy at the birth of a son to his deceased brother 'Abd Allah that he set free this female slave of his. She had also suckled Ḥamzah, another of the Prophet's uncles who was almost his same age. After some days, however, the Prophet was made over to the care of Ḥalîmah bint Abû Dhu'ayb of Banû Sa'd belonging to the Hawâzin branch of Quraysh. They lived in the open and healthy desert area of Ḥudaybiyah and were also noted for the purity of their Arab culture and the high standard of their language. Ḥalîmah's husband was Al-Ḥârith ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzâ ibn Rifâ'ah (also perhaps called 'Abû Kabshah). The couple themselves had a baby son named

= garh (India), 1962, pp. 171-172; 'Abul Ḥasan 'Alî al-Nadwî, *Muḥammad Rasûlullah* (Eng. tr. by M. Ahmad), Lucknow, 1979, p. 91, n. 4; Muḥammad al-Kurdî, *Nûr al-Yaqîn Fî Sîrat Sayyid al-Mursalîn*, Cairo, 1328 H., p. 9; Muḥammad Akram Khân, *Mustafâ Charit* (Bengali text), 4th edn., Dhaka, 1975, pp. 224-225. The other view is held, for instance, by Muḥammad al-Ghazâlî, *Fiqh al-Sîrah*, 7th impression, 1976, p. 60; Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal, *The Life of Muḥammad* (Eng. tr. Ismâ'îl Râji al-Fârûqî), Qum, Iran, n.d., pp. 47-48.

1. Ibn Hishâm, I., 157-158; Ibn Sa'd, I., 104; Ibn Ḥibbân, *Al-Sîrat al-Nabawiyyah wa Akhbâr al-Khulafâ'*, first impression, Beirut, 1407 / 1987, p. 53.

2. Suhaylî, *Al-Rawḍ al-'Unuf*, I., p. 105.

3. *Bukhârî*, no. 4896; *Muslim*, Nos. 124, 125; *Musnad*, IV, 80, 81, 404; V, 404; *Tirmidhî*, no. 2840; *Dârimî*, II, 317-318; Ibn Sa'd, I., 104-105.

4. *Musnad*, IV, 127, 128; V, 262; *Ṭayâlisî*, no. 1140; Ibn Sa'd, I., 102.

'Abd Allah and two daughters named respectively 'Unaysah and Ḥudhâfah. The latter was more commonly known as Shaymâ' and she, along with her mother, mainly looked after the boy Muḥammad (ﷺ).[1] In his later years the Prophet used to show affectionate respects to Shaymâ' and others of his foster relatives.[2]

Muḥammad (ﷺ) remaind in Ḥalîmah's care and nursing for two years in the first instance. During this period she used to bring the child every six months to 'Âminah for visit as well as for her satisfaction as to the child's growth and well-being. At the end of the first two years Ḥalîmah brought the child to 'Âminah for the purpose of finally making him over to her. But 'Âminah, in view of the unhealthy climate then prevailing at Makka and also in view of the satisfactory growth and health of the child asked Ḥalîmah to keep him with her for a further period. Ḥalîmah was only too glad to receive him back for she had already developed a strong motherly affection and fondness for the uncommonly healthy, handsome and sweet-mannered boy. Thus he remained with his foster parents for another term of two years or so.

Towards the end of this second term of his stay with his foster parents there occurred a miraculous and supernatural incident to him. It is known as *shaqq al-ṣadr* or "opening of the chest".[3] The reportes differ, however, in matters of detail as well as in respect of dates and places of the occurrence.[4] Shortly after the incident Ḥalîmah returned him finally to his mother.

IV. BOYHOOD AND THE JOURNEY TO SYRIA

The Prophet was not destined to enjoy the company and affection of his mother for long after his return from Ḥalîmah's care. Barely a year and a half elapsed after she had taken charge of her son, 'Âminah took him to Madina, accompanied by the family maid 'Umm 'Ayman, to visit her husband's maternal relatives. In the course of her return journey from Madina, how-

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 160-161; Ibn Sa'd, I, 108, 110-112; *Dârimî*, Intr. p. 8; *Musnad*, IV, 184.
2. Ibn Sa'd, I, 114-115.
3. Ibn Hishâm, I, 164-165; Ibn Sa'd, I, 112; *Musnad*, III, 121, 149, 238; IV, 184; *Muslim*, No. 261; *Nasâ'î*, Nos. 448, 452; *Dârimî*, Intr. p. 8.
4. See for discussion *Fatḥ al-Bârî*, V, 244-245.

ever, 'Âminah fell ill and died at Abwâ', a place between Madina and Makka. The Prophet was brought back to Makka by the maid servant 'Umm 'Ayman. Thus he became full orphan when he had just crossed the stage of infancy and stepped into boyhood. He was only six years old when he lost his mother too.

The charge of the boy now naturally devolved on the grandfather, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, who was then about 80 years old. The old man bestowed upon the orphan all care and affection and always kept him in his company. It is related that 'Abd al-Muaṭṭalib used to spend most of his time sitting on a mantle spread for him in the shade of the Ka'ba. His sons used to sit round him, but not on it, out of respect for him; but the boy Muḥammad (ﷺ) used to sit upon it. When his uncles attempted to take him away 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib prevented them from doing so, saying that he noticed signs of future greatness in the boy and caressing him by gently patting him on the back. It pleased 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib to see what the boy did while sitting near him.[1]

'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was, however, already far advanced in age and died after two years, at the age of eighty-two. When he realized his end was approaching he specifically entrusted the boy Muḥammad (ﷺ) to the care of his uncle 'Abû Ṭâlib, who was a full brother of 'Abd Allah.[2] The Prophet was only eight years old when his grandfather left him for ever. 'Abû Ṭâlib treated him like his own son and, as will be seen later on, did not abandon him even at the most trying hour of his own and the Prophet's life. The Prophet grew up along with his cousins, specially Ja'far and 'Alî, sons of 'Abû Ṭâlib, who turned out to be his best friends since boyhood.

Very little is recorded about the activities of the Prophet at this tender age except that he sometimes tended sheep along with his cousins. It is noted, however, that unlike the other children of his age he did not engage himself in useless and idle plays and games. Also, there is no reference whatsoever to his having ever received education at the hands of any individual or at any institution, nor to his having learnt to read and write.

The only notable incident recorded by the chroniclers about his early life is his journey, along with his uncle 'Abû Ṭâlib, in a trade caravan to Syria. The Prophet was about 10 or 12 years old at that time. The account of the

1. Ibn Hishâm, I., 168.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 179.

journey, as given by Ibn Isḥâq, is as follows: Once 'Abû Ṭâlib planned to go with a trade caravan to Syria. When the preparations were complete and the caravan was ready to depart, the boy Muḥammad (ﷺ) so stuck himslef to his uncle that the latter took pity on him and took him on the journey. The caravan arrived at Bosra where there lived a Christian monk named Baḥîra in a monastery or cave for him. He was well-versed in Christianity and its scripture. Previously many times the Quraysh caravans had passed by the same route and by his abode, but he had never taken any notice of them. This time, however, he treated them specially. This was so because, "it is alleged" (فيما يزعمون), that he had noticed something special in the caravan. He noticed from his cell the caravan approaching and a piece of cloud giving shade to the Prophet alone among his people. As the caravan came near the cell and stopped under a tree, the cloud also stopped there while the branches of the tree drooped down to protect the Prophet from the sun. Thus recognizing in the boy the signs of the coming Prophet as foretold in the Christian scripture Baḥîra prepared a sumptuous meal for the party and invited them to the feast, mentioning specifically that none shoud be left behind. Yet, when the party went to Baḥîra's place they left the Prophet behind with the equipage thinking that he was too young to be present at the reception. When Baḥîra noticed that the Prophet was not among his guests, he enquired of them whether everyone had come, and on being told that only a boy had been left behind, he requested them to bring him too, which was done. When the Prophet came Baḥîra "got up and embraced him and made him sit with the people." Baḥîra also looked at him closely and noticed his physical features and other things described as signs of the coming Prophet in the Christian scripture. When the people had finished eating and gone away Baḥîra had a conversation with the Prophet, asked him a few questions about his affairs and was satisfied that the answers "coincided with what Baḥîra knew of his description." Then the monk looked at Muḥammad's (ﷺ) back and saw "the seal of prophethood" between his shoulders in the "very place described" in the scripture. Baḥîra then went to the boy's uncle 'Abû Ṭâlib and asked him what relation the boy was to him, and when he said that the boy was his son, Baḥîra remarked that that could not be the case, "for it could not be that the father of this boy was alive." Thereupon 'Abû Ṭâlib said that the boy was

his nephew and that his father had died before the child was born. "You have told the truth", said Baḥîra and added: "Take your nephew back to his country and guard him carefully against the Jews, for by Allah! if they see him and know about him what I know, they will do him evil; a great future lies before this nephew of yours, so take him home quickly. So his uncle took him off quickly and brought him back to Makka when he had finished his trading in Syria." "It is alleged", further writes Ibn Isḥâq, that three other "people of the Book" had noticed in the Prophet what Baḥîra had seen and that they tried to get at him but Baḥîra kept them away.[1]

The story is related in more or less the same form in other works too.[2] The report in *Tirmidhî* adds that as the caravan stopped near the monastery Baḥîra came out to them, recognized the Prophet in the party and exclaimed: "This is the leader of the world, the Messenger of God, who will be sent as a blessing for mankind!" The Quraysh party, being surprised, asked Baḥira about his reasons for making such a remark. He replied that he had noticed that since the party left Makka, every tree and every stone on the way prostrated in honour of the Prophet and that such would never be the case with trees and stones except with regard to a Prophet. It is further stated that Baḥîra noticed the shade of a tree moving as the Prophet moved from place to place and that a few "Romans" came in search of the Prophet because they had come to know from a study of their scripture that the promised Prophet was to appear at that time! The report ends by saying that Baḥîra earnestly requested 'Abû Ṭâlib not to take the boy to the country where the "inimical" Jews abounded and that 'Abû Ṭâlib sent him back to Makka "and 'Abû Bakr sent Bilâl with him".[3]

Muslim scholarly opinions are divided on the correctness of many of the details in the above story, though the essential facts of the Prophet's travel to Syria with his uncle and the meeting with Baḥîra are not doubted. Ibn Isḥâq inserts the qualifying phrase "as they think" (يزعمون or فيما يزعمون) at least five times in his account, once before every material statement. Tirmidhî, while holding that the report is "good" (حسن) adds that it is an "unusual one" (غريب) and that he does not know it from any other source.[4] The obvious error in the

1. Ibn Hishâm, I., 170-173.

2. See for instance Al-Ṭabarî, *Târîkh*, II, 278-279; Ibn Sa'd, I., 121; *Tirmidhî*, no. 3620 (Vol. V., Egyptian edn,. 1975, 590-591).

3. *Tirmidhî*, no. 3620 (Vo. V., pp. 590-591).

4. *Ibid.* His words are: (هذا حديث حسن غريب لا نعرفه إلا من هذا الوجه)

last statement of the report which says that 'Abû Bakr sent Bilâl with the Prophet was pointed out simultaneously by Al-Dhahabî (d. 748 H.)[1] and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, (d. 751 H.),[2] both mentioning that Bilâl was not born and 'Abû Bakr was a child at that time.

No other incident about the Prophet's early life is, however, on record.

1. Al-Dhahabî, *Mîzân al I'tidâl*, II, 581 (no. 4934).
2. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Zâd al-Ma'âd*, I., 76-77.

CHAPTER VI

THE ORIENTALISTS ON THE PROPHET'S FAMILY STATUS, NAME AND CHILDHOOD

The orientalists have made a number of assumptions and suggesstions regarding the very initial phase of the Prophet's life. These assumptions centre mainly round his family status, his name, the incident of *shaqq al-ṣadr* with the insinuation of epilepsy, his meeting with Baḥîra and some other childhood matters. These are briefly discussed below.

I: REGARDING THE FAMILY STATUS

The first thing to notice about the orientalists' views about the Prophet's early life is their attempt to show that he belonged to an unimportant and humble family of Makka. The suggestion is put forward more pointedly by Margoliouth.[1] His arguments are as follows:

(a) That the "Kuraish in the Koran wonder why a Prophet should be sent to them who was not of noble birth."[2]

(b) That when at the height of his power the Prophet was compared by the Quraysh people "to a palm springing out of a dung-hill."[3]

(c) That on the day of his triumphal entry into Makka the Prophet declared "that an end had now come to the pagan aristocracy by blood", the implication being that he himself was not of aristocratic blood.[4]

(d) That "he himself rejected the title, 'Master and son of our Master' offerd him by some devotee."[5]

(e) That his grandfather, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, was engaged in money-lending, which profession was "of little esteem in the eyes of the Arabs". And if he dug the Zamzam well and rendered its water potable by mixing it with camel's milk, honey, or raisins, it could not be assumed that "he put himself to this trouble without remuneration". Hence "it would seem that the offices of 'waterer and entertainer' which later writers represent as posts of honour at Meccah resolve themselves into a trade, and one that was not hon-

1. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, 45-51.
2. *Ibid.*, 47.
3. *Ibid.* (citing *Musnad*, IV, 166.)
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.* (citing *Musnad*, III, 241).

ourable since the Prophet afterwards forbade the sale of water."[1]

(f) That the name 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, "slave of al-Muṭṭalib", though given "a fanciful explanation" by the historians, "is probably to be interpreted as meaning that its owner was at one time actually a slave, though afterwards manumitted and enrolled into the Hashim clan."[2]

(g) That when the Prophet's enemies wished to insult him, they called him "the son of Abu Kabshah" which conveyed some sting; "but what the nature of the insult was we cannot define with certainty."[3]

Now, the proofs thus adduced by Margoliouth to show the Prophet as of humble origin are far-fetched, ill-conceived and based on gross twisting and concealing of the material facts. Thus the very first argument is built on an unjustifiable twisting and tampering with the meaning of a Qur'ânic passage, 43:31, which says: "And they said: 'Why is not this Qur'ân sent down to a big man of the two cities (Makka and Ṭâif)?"[4]. The same objection of the unbelievers is conveyed in 38:8 also which says: "Is it on him, of all of us that the Qur'ân (*al-dhikr*) has been sent down?"[5] Neither in these two passages nor anywhere in the Qur'ân is the slightest indication that the Quraysh unbelievers called in question his family status or said that he did not deserve to be a Prophet because, as Margoliouth twists it, "he was not of noble birth". The clear implication of both the passages is that they did not consider the Prophet as one of the leading men of the two towns and this they said because, in their peculiar notion, only a wealthy and influential individual should be the recipient of Allah's message. They even proceeded from the faulty premise which is mentioned immediately before 38:8, i.e, in 38:4, that any human being like themselves could not be Allah's messenger.[6] It is an admitted fact that the Prophet was no leader in his society, particulary in the presence of his uncles like 'Abû Ṭâlib, 'Abû Lahab and other close relatives from Banû 'Abd Shams and Banû Makhzum, to whom he was but in the position of a young son. It is also worth remembering that leadership in the then Makkan or Arab society was determined on the basis of seniority

1. *Ibid.*, 47-48.
2. *Ibid.*, 48.
3. *Ibid.*, 50-51.
4. 43:31 = ﴿وقالوا لولا نُزّل هذا القرءان على رجل من القريتين عظيم﴾
5. Q. 38:8 = ﴿أءُنـزِل عليه الذكر من بيننا . . .﴾
6. 38:4 = ﴿وعجبوا أن جاءهم مُـنـذر منهم . . .﴾

in age which was thought to impart the other qualification, namely, maturity in wisdom. In a tribal society like that at Makka the concept of one family being lower in origin than another is an anathema; for the families and clans constituting the tribe were all descended from the same and not very distant ancestor and also they were closely inter-related by ties of blood and marriage. We of course hear of poets and individuals boasting of the superiority of their respective families or tribes; but these were more often than not marks of the intertribal rivalry and empty claims than true statements of the facts. In citing a Qur'ânic evidence to prove the supposed humble family status of the Prophet, Margoliouth is wrong in three ways. He has distorted the meaning of the Qur'ânic passage or passages which do in no way reflect adversely on the Prophet's origin and family status. Second, he has misunderstood the nature of the Makkan society wherein, though the clans and families were not all equal in wealth and influence, none of them did, nor could, regard the other as of humble origin. Third, he seems to assume that a person of noble birth is invariably a man of means and influence in his society, or that a man of means and influence is invariably of noble birth — both of which assumptions are equally faulty.

With regard to his second argument, Margoliouth has not revealed the whole truth. The report in the *Musnad* which he cites[1] says that once a group of the Helpers (*anṣâr*) came to the Prophet and reported that the Makkans were saying all sorts of things about him, some of them even comparing him to a palm growing out of a dung-hill. On this the Prophet asked those present before him to tell who he was. They all shouted out: "You are the Messenger of Allah". The Prophet said: "I am Muḥammad, son of 'Abd Allah, son of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib" adding, (and here the narrator remarks that he had never before heard the Prophet thus speaking about his ancestry), that Allah had raised him from the best of families in the best of tribes. "So I am the best of you in respect of family, and the best of you as a person."

Margoliouth's use of this report to show the supposed humble family status of the Prophet is faulty in two main respects. He simply grasps at the obviously spiteful remark of the Prophet's avowed enemies, disregarding the many other indisputable facts that prove to the contrary. Secondly, and more seriously, he withholds from his readers the important fact that the Prophet, when he came to know about the malicious remark about him, immediately

1. *Musnad*, IV, 165-166, *ḥadîth* of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib ibn Rabî'ah ibn al-Ḥârith.

protested and mentioned before the audience the names of his father and grandfather in such a way as leaves no room for doubt that they were so well-known figures that they needed no further introduction. In fact many of the *anṣâr* before whom the Prophet thus spoke were 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's own maternal relatives. The Prophet did not stop there. He specifically pointed out that he belonged to the best family of the best of clans in the best of tribes. By suppressing this very material fact of the Prophet's immediate protestation against his enemies' malicious rermark and his unequivocal and public declaration of his most respectable family background Margoliouth has miserably manoeuvred to turn one of the decisive evidences in favour of the Prophet as one against him! That the report in question is one of the strongest evidences in favour of the Prophet's family status is shown by the fact that in his well known index for the traditions Wensinck rightly lists this report under the heading, which is the Prophet's saying: "I am the best of you in respect of family, and the best of you as a person."[1]

As regards the point at (c), namely, that on the day of his triumphal entry into Makka the Prophet declared that "an end had now come to the pagan aristocracy by blood", Margoliouth clearly misconstrues this fact. The declaration was made not because the Prophet himself was of no family; and we have just mentioned above that he had publicly declared that he belonged to the best family in the best tribe. The declaration under reference was made to do away with the root of the pagan evil of blood-feud which often grew out of a false sense of honour and family pride; and also to emphasize that a person's real claim to honour lay in the purity of his faith and in the justice and greatness of his acts, rather than in his family origin.

Similarly misleading is the argument at (d), namely, that the Prophet himself rejected the title, 'Master, and son of our Master', by which he was once addressed by a person. The Prophet discountenanced the form of address not because he was of no respectable family origin but because, as the report which Margoliouth cites in his support[2] clearly states, he did not like to adopt any other title except the one, "Messenger of Allah" (*Rasûl Allah*), which Allah had bestowed on him. Margoliouth's fallacy would be obvious if we recall the Qur'ânic passage 33:40 which forbids addressing the Prophet

1. A.J. Wensinck, *Miftâh Kunûz al-Sunnah*, (Ar. tr. by F.A. Bâqî), p. 436. The heading is: (فانا خيركم بيتاً وخيركم نفساً)

2. *Musnad* III, 241.

as the "Father of so-and-so". No one would use this passage to argue that the Prophet was childless and therefore no father of any individual! As in the report under discussion, so also this Qur'ânic passage specifically enjoins addressing him as *Rasûl Allah* instead of using any other form of address.

Equally fallacious and far-fetched is his argument at (e). He refers to a document mentioned by Ibn al-Nadîm[1] which purports to have been written by 'Abd al-Muṯṯalib himself and which records that a certain Himyarite of Ṣan'â' (Yaman) owed him one thousand silver *dirhams*. From this fact Margoliouth infers "that Abd al-Muṯṯalib was possessed of some capital and occasionally lent it out".[2] Now, Ibn al-Nadîm mentions this document found in *Khalîfah* al-Ma'mûn's treasury by way of tracing the development of Arabic writing. There is no indication whatsoever that the money was lent by 'Abd al-Muṯṯalib on interest. The debt recorded could as well have arisen out of business transactions, remembering the fact that the Quraysh, particularly Banû Hâshim, carried on trade with Yaman as well as Abyssinia. It is simply unlikely that a Makkan capitalist at that time would lend money on interest to an individual of so distant a land. Moreover, if at all it was so lent, the rate of interest would invariably have been indicated in the document. But Margoliouth argues in a circle. He states: "In order to harmonize the fact of his ['Abd al-Muṯṯalib's] wealth with the fact of his being in a humble station we have to suppose that the profession in which his money was made was not an honbourable one."[3] Thus Margoliouth first assumes that 'Abd al-Muṯṯalib was a person "in a humble station", which is not proved by any independent evidence. But proceeding from this initially unsubstantiated assumption Margoliouth makes the second assumption that since 'Abd al-Muṯṯalib was a man in humble satation, the wealth found in his possession must have been made by "not an honourable profession". And from this second assumption Margoliouth goes on to avdance the third assumption that since his money was earned not by an honourable profession, 'Abd al-Muṯṯalib must have been a man of humble origin! Needless to point out that no sober historian would proceed to vilify a historical figure on the basis of such a circle of unsubstantiated assumptions. Moreover, Margoliouth's underlying assumption that money-lending as such was an unhonourable

1. See Ibn al-Nadîm, *Fihrist*, Dâr al-Ma'rifah, Beirut, 1398 / 1978, pp. 7-8.
2. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, 47-48.
3. *Ibid.*, 48.

profession in pre-Islamic Arabia is not at all correct. The evidence adduced by him on this point, that of the poets' boastings of their skill in eluding the creditors' claims,[1] is both questionable and un-convincing.

Equally untenable is the innuendo that ‘Abd al-Muṯṯalib turned the offices of "waterer and entertainer", which he held, into trade by selling the water of Zamzam. There is no evidence to show that he did so. On the other hand, if he dug and renovated the Zamzam well and made its water available to the public and the pilgrims, as Margoliouth admits, and if he held the offices of waterer and entertainer to the pilgrims for over half a century, which by all accounts he did, he did so no doubt with the support and acquiescence of the Makkan people in general. And this fact is a decisive evidence of his preeminence and leadership in the Makkan society.

The most preposterous is Margoliouth's assertion noted at (f). He translates the name ‘Abd al-Muṯṯalib as Al-Muṯṯalib's slave and states that this means that "its owner was actually a slave, though afterwards manumitted and enrolled in the Hâshim clan". He rejects" as "fanciful" the account given in the histories about the origin of this name;[2] but he himself advances no positive evidence in support of his own three-fold fancy, namely, (a) that ‘Abd al-Muṯṯalib was originally a slave; (b) that he was subsequently manumitted and (c) that he was then enrolled in the Hâshim clan. All these arbitrary assumptions are based simply on a literal transiation of the name. The translation is not quite correct, in that *‘abd* is a more general term usually signifying 'servant' rather than slave, for which the more accurate expression is *raqîq*. That Margoliouth's fancy is quite beside the mark is evident from the fact that in the the contemporary Makkan society an actual slave was seldom addressed or known as the *‘abd* of so-and so. Slaves who were subsequently manumitted, such a Bilâl, ‘Ammâr and Khabbâb, were never known as the *‘abds* of their respective masters. A son of Quṣayy, founder of the greatness of Quraysh, was called ‘Abd (or ‘Abd Quṣayy). He was no slave. Nor was ‘Abd Manâf the "slave" of Manâf. Had ‘Abd al-Muṯṯalib been a manumitted slave admitted into Banû Hâshim, he would never have been accepted in pre-Islamic Makka as the dignitary in charge of the affairs of the Ka‘ba, discharging the functions of "waterer and entertainer" to the pilgrims, however much Margoliouth underestimates those functions. Nor

1. *Ibid.*, 48-49.
2. See *supra*, p. 120 for the origin of the name.

could 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib marry the daughters of the most respectable clans, including Banû Makhzûm; nor could 'Abû Lahab, the son of the supposedly manumitted slave, marry the daughter of Ḥarb ibn 'Umayyah, sister of 'Abû Sufyân, all of whom are regarded as of higher and better families by Margoliouth and his followers of the orientalists.

Finally, as in the case of his argument at (b), so also in his argument at (g) Margoliouth simply grasps at the abusive remark of the Prophet's enemy and suppresses the other material facts connected with the incident wherein the Prophet was referred to as the son of 'Abû Kabshah. Margoliouth says that great uncertainty prevails as to the identity of 'Abû Kabshah; but he acknowledges that while some applied it to the Prophet's foster-father, the "patronymic" was "fairly common."[1] In fact, the expression did not refer to any real person. The expression "son of 'Abû Kabshah" was only an abusive term which the Arabs used commonly to apply to persons against whom they bore ill-will and anger.[2] Margoliouth's allusion is obviously to 'Abû Sufyân's remark which he made privately to his companion when both of them were miserably discomfited at the court of Heraclius who interrogated him on receipt of the Prophet's letter.[3] Finding that the Byzantine ruler was favourably disposed towards the Prophet 'Abû Sufyân disgustingly whispered to his companion saying that "the affair of the son of 'Abû Kabshah" had prevailed even at Heraclius's court.[4] While citing this malicious and private remark of 'Abû Sufyân's in order to show the Prophet's allegedly humble family status, Margoliouth omits to note that the same 'Abû Sufyân on the same occasion and in the same report is found to declare publicly in reply to the very first question put to him by Heraclius, that the Prophet was of noble family. More importantly, 'Abû Sufyân adds that he would have attempted to speak lies against the Prophet had he ('Abû Sufyân) not feared being contradicted by the other Makkans who were presant at Heraclius's court and whom the latter had specifically asked to contradict 'Abû Sufyân if he spoke anything not true. Thus the very incident and report which Margoliouth twists in order to prove his assumption is in fact another very strong evidence showing the noble family status of the Prophet, publicy acknowledged

1. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, 50-51.
2. *Fatḥ al-Bârî*, I., 53.
3. *Bukhârî*, No. 6.
4. The Arabic exression is: (لقد أمر أمر ابن أبي كبشه)

in a foreign court by his then arch-enemy, 'Abû Sufyân.

As for Watt, he appears to adopt Margoliouth's conclusion about the Prophet's family status without, however, recapitulating the former's arguments. Thus he at times explicitly states and at other times implies that the Prophet did not belong to the aristocratic group of families.[1] Watt also cites the Qur'ânic passage 43:31 to show the Prophet's ordinary position in the society, though elsewhere he (Watt) suggests that during the first few years of his mission the Prophet had grown sufficiently important to induce the Quraysh leaders to make him offers of compromise. Watt makes, however, a completely new conjecture about 'Abd al-Muṯṯalib's role during Abrahah's expedition against Makka, making him appear in a very unfavourable light. Watt assumes a prolonged trade rivalry between Banû Hâshim and other Quraysh clans like 'Abd Shams, Nawfal and Makhzûm and states that 'Abd al-Muṯṯalib's negotiations with Abrahah "ought to be interpreted as a party move of a small group of Quraysh (along with the tribes of Du'il and Hudhayl) from which the main body of the Quraysh held aloof. If that is so, then 'Abd al-Muṯṯalib was presumably trying to get support form the Abyssinians against his rivals among Quraysh, such as the clans of 'Abd Shams, Nawfal and Makhzûm... We cannot be sure whether Abrahah accepted the overtures of 'Abd al-Muṯṯalib or whether, judging him not strong enough, he rejected them. In any case the expedition came to nothing..."[2]

Now, Watt's theory of a prolonged trade rivalry between Banû Hâshim and other clans (and his economic interpretation of rise of Islam generally) we shall have occasion to deal with a little later on in this work.[3] Here it may be noted that his conjecture about 'Abd al-Muṯṯalib's role is totally wrong and irrational. It is wrong, and directly contrary to the sources, to say that 'Abd al-Muṯṯalib's action was a "move of a small group of Quraysh" to obtain "support from the Abyssinians against his rivals among Quraysh". He had gone to Abrahah's camp as the leader and spokesman of the Makkans and after they, along with Banû Kinânah and Banu Hudhayl had decided about their inability to offer resistance to Abrahah's forces.[4] Also, it was Abrahah who had sent his messenger to Makka to meet its "chief" and in

1. Watt, *M. at. M.*, p. 49.
2. Watt, *M. at M.*, 14.
3. See *infra*, Chap. XXIV.
4. *Supra*, pp: 41.

effect to deliver to him an ultimatum requiring him to abandon the Ka'ba in order to avoid loss of the Makkans' lives. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's visit to Abrahah's camp was a sequel to this move made by Abrahah himself. His messenger met 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib because he was found to be the virtual chief and spokesman for the Makkan community as a whole. And if he was accompanied by the chief of Du'il and Hudhayl that means they also went to Abrahah's camp in accordance with the joint decision of Makkans and the neighbouring tribes not to offer armed resistance to the Abyssinian invader and to try to persuade him to return without destroying the Ka'ba. The report cited by Ibn Isḥâq also mentions the important fact that they all offered Abrahah one-third of the wealth of Tihâmah if he only spared the city and the Ka'ba. All these facts squarely belie all three of Watt's assumptions. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib went to Abrahah's camp not at the head of a small group of Quraysh from which thier main body held themselves aloof, but as the leader and spokesman for all of them. He did not go there to seek any advantage from Abrahah, but to persuade him, even by offering substantial material benefits to him, to leave the city and its templė alone. The main body of the Quraysh did not remain silent or indifferent to the negotiations which were open and were carried out on their behalf.

Watt's assumptions are also contrary to reason. Abrahah came acknowledgedly to destory the Ka'ba and thereby the commercial primacy of Makka in Arabia. This being the main issue, it is simply unreasonable to assume that he would be amenable to making a commercial deal with a small and allegedly unimportant group of Makkans giving them trade advantages over their supposedly wealthier and stronger rivals in the same city. How could even one of that city, with an iota of common sense left in him, approach Abrahah with such a proposal when his objective was all too clear, namely, destruction of the commercial position of Makka as a whole, and not of that of any section of its traders? Abrahah had made all the preparations and had come all the way to realize that all-absorbing purpose of his. Hence, if he was at all to be dissuaded from carrying out his design, it was he who was to receive some convincingly favourable terms, rather than any section of the city who could expect to receceive some advantageous terms from him. The position is thus just the reverse of what Watt would have us believe. And, again, how could the supposedly stronger and commercially superior clans of the city remain idle or silent in the situation, and why did they not denounce 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib then or subsequently as a traitor and fifth-

columnist? After all, his negotiations with Abrahah were no secret affair. Watt appers to have been so preoccupied with his assumption of a commercial rivalry between 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and the other clans, and of the former's supposedly inferior position at the time, that these simple questions do not occur to him at all. His statement that we "cannot be sure whether Abrahah accepted the overtures of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib or whether, judging him not strong enough, he rejected them", is a naive attempt to confuse the issue. In fact, instead of placing the facts in a straight way and thereby showing 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's supposedly inferior commercial position at the time, Watt, like Margoliouth, argues in a circle. He says that 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's negotiations with Abrahah "ought to be interpreted" as a party move by a small Quraysh group and then says: "If that is so, then 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was presumably trying to get support from the Abyssinians against his rivals among Quraysh"; and as he is *presumed* to have done so, the other Quraysh clans like 'Abd Shams and Nawfal "had apparently by this time seized most of the trade with Syria and Yemen which had formerly belonged to Hâshim and al-Muṭṭalib."[1] This is clearly arguing in a circle and basing one unsubstantiated assumption upon another.

To sum up, the Margoliouth-Watt assumption of an unimportant family origin for the Prophet and of an inferior social position for 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib is belied by an array of indisputable facts, the most important of which are as follows:

(1) All the Quraysh clans descended from the same person, Fihr (Quraysh) and their greatness at Makka was established by Quṣayy, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's great-grandfather.

(2) The commercial greatness of the Makkan Quraysh was initiated by 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's father Hâshim who, by a series of trade pacts with the Byzantine authorities and others, secured tangible trade adavantages for the Quraysh in Syria, Yaman and Abyssinia, besides securing safe journey for the Quraysh caravans through the tribal territories.

(3) All the Quraysh clans at Makka were closely related, one to another, by ties of blood as well as marriage, so that it would be a sheer anathema to conceive for one clan a superior family origin to that of another. Particularly, there was no Quraysh clan with which the members of Banû Hâshim, the Prophet's clan, were not so related. That is why he, in the face of his kins-

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, 14.

men's opposition, applealed to them saying that he did not expect any material advantage from them except love and consideration due to the near ones.[1]

(4) 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the Prophet's grandfather, discovered and re-excavated the Zamzam well, which in itself was an epoch-making event in the life of the Quraysh as a whole and which further ensured their pre-eminence over all the Arabs. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib held the offices of "waterer and entertainer" to the pilgrims for over half a century for which he became a well-known figure throughout Arabia. The simple mention of his name was a sufficient introduction for him and his family. It was he, as the virtual leader of the Makkans, with whom Abrahah carried on negotiations and it was on his advice that the Quraysh as a whole betook themselves to the hills in order to save themselves from Abrahah's army. It was 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, again, who consigned the Ka'ba, on behalf of all the Quraysh, to Allah's care beseeching Him to protect it as His House. The miraculous destruction of Abrahah's army was naturally looked upon as Allah's response to that prayer and the whole episode heightened the prestige of the House and of the Quraysh as a whole in the eyes of all the Arabs.

(5) 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib had contracted marriage relations with almost all important Quraysh clans. One of his wives, mother of 'Abd Allah and thus the Prophet's full grandmother, was a Makhzûmite lady. Thus the Prophet combined in his veins the blood of Banû Makhzûm, through his grandmather, of Banû Zuhrah, through his mother and of Banû Hâshim, through his father. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's other sons and daughters too were married to important clans like Makhzûm and 'Abd Shams.

(6) The leading opponents of the Prophet, whom the orientalists appear to depict as members of high and respectable families, were none but his close kins. For instance the leaders of Banû 'Abd Shams were 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's own uncle 'Abd Shams's descendants; while the leaders of Banû 'Abd al-Dâr were 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's father Hâshim's own paternal cousin Asad's descendants.

(7) Finally, Banû Hâshim alone, under the leadership of 'Abû Ṭâlib, offered protection to the Prophet against the opposition of all the other

1. Q. 42:23 = ﴿... قل لا أسئلكم عليه أجراً إلا المودة فى القربى ...﴾
"Say, 'No reward do I ask of you for this (work of mine) except the love of those of near of kin.'"

Quraysh clans and successfully withstood their boycott and blockade for nearly three years. The other clans, though they were combined in opposition to the Prophet and were determined upon killing him, did not dare do so simply for fear of a bloody conflict with Banû Hâshim. Nothing côuld be a more decisive evidence showing that despite the vicissitudes in Banû Hâshim's fortune it was still socially and physically a match for all the Makkan clans combined.

It was thus not for nothing that the Prophet publicly claimed, and his enemy 'Abû Sufyân publicly affirmed, that he was raised from the best family of the best tribe of the Arabs. But he did not claim any greatness, nor the allegiance of his followers, on that score. On the contrary he emphasized the essential equality of men and enunciated that one's nobility and greatness lies in the quality of one's faith, character and acts. Hence Islam does not attach any false value to mere "noble" pedigree. That is no reason, however, why the Prophet's noble pedigree should not be recognized as a historical fact.

II. REGARDING HIS NAME

The orientalists have similarly attempted to create confusion about the Prophet's name. The first modern scholar to agitate doubts about it seems to be Aloy Sprenger.[1] Taking his cue from a report reproduced in *Al-Sîrat al-Ḥalabiyyah*[2] Sprenger stated that the original name of the Prophet was "Qutham" but it was subsequently changed to "Muḥammad". Sprenger made this statement in such a way as to convey an impression that there elapsed a considerable time between the adoption of the first and second names.

Now, it is worth noting that earlier in the same chapter of his work Al-Ḥalabî reproduces several other reports showing that the name "Muḥammad" was agreed upon by the child's mother ('Âminah) and grandfather ('Abd al-Muṭṭalib) and that the latter held a feast on the seventh day of the child's

1. A scholar of Austrian origin with deep Christianizing sympathies, Aloy Sprenger was appointed Principal of the Calcutta Madrasah (1852-1854) by the English East India Company's administration for the purpose of de-Islamizing that institution by eliminating from its courses of study all that constituted real Islamic subjects, including the Qur'ân and *ḥadîth*. He started writing his work on the Prophet at that time. It was subsequently published under the title: *Das Leben Und Die Lehre Des Mohamed* (Ester Band, Berlin, 1861; Zweiter Band, Berlin, 1862 and Dritter Band, Berlin, 1865).

2. 'Alî ibn Burhân al-Dîn al-Ḥalabî (975-1044), *Al-Sîrat al-Ḥalabiyyah Fî al-Sirât al-'Amîn al-Ma'mûn*.

birth and publicly announced his name as "Muḥammad"(ﷺ).[1] Even the report relied upon by Sprenger shows clearly that the name Muḥammad was finally decided upon only a few hours at the latest after the child's birth. The report runs as follows:[2]

"In the *Imtâ'*[3] it is reported that when Qath'am ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib died at the age of nine, three years before the birth of the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be on him, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was greatly grieved. So, when the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be on him, was born, he named him 'Qutham', till his mother 'Âminah informed 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib that she had been instructed in a dream to name the child 'Muḥammad'. Thereupon he ('Abd al-Muṭṭalib) named him 'Muḥammad'.

It is thus clear that the report simply describes what transpired immediately after the birth of the child, and definitely before the seventh day of his life when the *'aqîqah* ceremony was held and the public and formal announcement of his name was made.

Almost simultaneously with Sprenger, Muir advanced his remarks about the Prophet's name. He did not of course refer to the name 'Qutham', but otherwise attempted to create confusion about the name, particularly the name 'Ahmad'. He suggested that this latter form was adopted by the Muslims and became favourite with them for their confrontation with the Christians and Jews because it fell in line with the "supposed" prophecy about their Prophet in the Bible. Muir writes:[4]

"This name [Muḥammad] was rare among the Arabs but not unknown.... Another form is Aḥmad, which having been erroneously employed as a translation of 'The Paraclete' in some Arabic version of the New Testament, became a favourite term with Mahometans, especially in addressing Jews and Christians; for it was (they said) the title under which the Prophet had been in their books predicted."

In a note added to this statement Muir further stated:[5]

"The word Ahmad must have occurred by mistake in some early Arabic translation

1. *Al-Sîrat al-Ḥalabiyyah*, Beirut reprint, 1400 / 1980, pp. 128-130.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 131. The Arabic text runs as follows:

(وفي الإمتاع: لما مات قثم بن عبد المطلب قبل مولد رسول الله ﷺ بثلاث سنين وهو ابن تسع سنين وجد عليه وجدا شديدا. فلما ولد رسول الله ﷺ سماه قثم حتى أخبرته أمه آمنه أنها أمرت في منامها أن تسميه محمداً فسماه محمدا.)

3. Al-Maqrîzî, Taqî al-Dîn Aḥmad 'Alî, *Imtâ' al-'Asmâ' bimâ li'al-Rasûl min al-Anbâ' wa 'l-Amwâl wa al-Ḥafadah wa al-Mutâ'*

4. W. Muir, *The Life of Mahomet*, Vol. I., London, 1858, p. 16. (Third edition, London, 1894, p. 5).

5. *Ibid.*, first edition, p. 17, n.

of John's Gospel, for 'the Comforter',... or was forged as such by some ignorant or designing monk in Mahomet's time. Hence the partiality for this name, which was held to be a promise or prophecy of Mahomet."

The subject of Biblical prophecy about the Prophet needs a separate treatment. Here only the main weaknesses of Muir's remarks may be noticed. It is well known that the Muslim historians, while dicussing the novelty of the name 'Muḥammad', themselves take care to note that a few other persons had been named 'Muḥammad' because their parents had by chance come to know from some well-informed Christian monk that there was a prophecy in the Bible about the advent of a Prophet who was expected to appear very shortly and who would bear the name 'Muḥammad'. Hence each of the parents named their son 'Muḥammad' with the fond hope that he might turn out to be the expected Prophet.[1] It is also noted that the persons so named were all contemporaries with the Prophet and most of them were born close to the time of his call to Prophethood.[2] Muir is aware of this fact and the reason thus given by the historians for the parents' thus naming their children; but he dismisses this reason as "the usual Mahometan credulity and desire" to "exhibit anticipation of the Prophet."[3]

Muir thus in effect relies upon one aspect of the information supplied by the Muslim historians and rejects and ridicules the other aspect of the same piece of information. Thus he avoids mentioning directly that the historians state that the Prophet was given the names of both Muḥammad and Aḥmad since his infancy, and refers to the form 'Aḥmad' in a roundabout way saying that it "became a favourite term with Mahometans, especially in addressing Jews and Christians", because the name was supposed to have been mentioned in the latter's holy scriptures. But since the name Aḥmad did really occur in the then current Arabic version of the Bible Muir proceeds to explain it away by two futher unsubstantiated assumptions, namely, that it (Aḥmad) was an "erroneous" translation of "The Paraclete" mentioned in the New Testament and that it "was forged as such by some ignorant or designing monk in Mahomet's time." Clearly Muir here betrays the weakness of his assumption. If, in the first instance, it was a question of mere mis-

1. See for instance Suhaylî, I (Dâr al-Fikr edition), p. 182 and *Al-Sîrat al-Ḥalabiyyah*, I., p. 131.

2. *Ibid.* See also Muḥammad Rawwâs Qal'ajî, *Al-Tafsîr al-Siyâsî li al-Sîrah*, etc., Beirut, 1399 / 1979, pp. 17-18.

3. Muir, *op. cit.*, first edition, p. 17, n.

translation in the Arabic version of the Bible, an indication of the mistake would have been decisive on the point. But Muir is evidently not sure. Hence he falls back on the alternative of alleging forgery on the part of some "ignorant or designing monk in Mahomet's time." Why such a monk, if there was any, should have undertaken the questionable expedient of committing a forgery while translating the Bible during the Prophet's time is not explained by Muir. Following his own assertion, however, the inescapable corollary would be that the so-called designing monk would insert the name Aḥmad in the alleged translation to show the compatibility of the text with the name only if the Prophet had already been bearing it. In other words, Muir's own assumption presupposes that the Prophet had been bearing that name at the time.

Muir's other assumption that the term Aḥmad became a favourite with the Muslims because it was found in the alleged mistaken translation of the Biblical text tends to imply that the name in question was adopted later on when they became aware of its existence in the Bible—an implication which is in no way supported by the known facts, nor by reason. Simplified, the twin assumption of Muir's with their implications would stand as follows: The Prophet had been bearing the name Aḥmad since his early life and as such a desiging monk made a forged and mistaken translation of the word 'Paraclete' occurring in the New Testament as 'Aḥmad'; and since the expression 'Aḥmad' was found in the Arabic version of the New Testament, that term became favourite with the Muslims. Nothing could be more confusing than such arguing in a circle.

In fact the tenor and purport of Muir's assumptions is to nullify and neutralize the Biblical prediction about the Prophet, which is neither a question of mistaken translation nor a subsequent development. In the Qur'ân it is claimed that the coming of the Prophet was foretold in the previously revealed scriptures and that this fact was known to the "People of the Book".[1] To this claim neither the Prophet's contemporary Christians and Jews, nor the unbelieving Makkans who were in close touch with the latter in the matter of opposition to him, gave a lie at that time. Both the names Muḥammad and Aḥmad for the Prophet occur in the Qur'ân. Therefore it is simply incorrect to state that either of these names was adopted subsequently when the Muslims began to confront the Jews and Christians. Nor could it be reasonably suggested that the Prophet adopted either of these names at a

1. Q. 7:157. See also Q. 2:146; 6:20.

later stage in his life when he had already claimed to have received the call to Prophethood or in the Madina period when he had been fairly established in his mission; for there was no point in taking the questionable step of changing his personal name at that stage just to make the new name conform with the Biblical text. Such a step at that stage would have only exposed his weakness, instead of imparting any strength to his claim, and would in all likelihood have created serious misgivings in the ranks of his own followers, if not causing the desertion of many. It would also have been a very effective point of attack on him by his adversaries and detractors.

The twin assumptions of Muir that 'Aḥmad' is a mistaken translation of the text in the New Testament and that the name is a later adoption or popularization by the Muslims in the course of their confrontation with the Jews and Christians have been taken over, in some form or other, by subsequent Christian apologists and orientalists. Hence, on the one hand, attempts have been made to show that the Biblical text does not really contain any prophecy about the Prophet of Islam;[1] and, on the other, it has been suggested that the Qur'ânic expression in 61:6—"His name is Aḥmad" (اسمه أحمد)—is a later interpolation,[2] or that the expression *Aḥmad* in that passage "must be taken in an adjectival sense rather than regarded as an interpolation."[3]

It is not necessary here to enter into the question of Biblical prophecy about Muḥammad (ﷺ), but it must be noted that in so far as the latter two assumptions are concerned they are merely elaborations of Muir's suggestion that the name Aḥmad became a favourite with the Muslims at a subsequent stage.

The assumption that the Qur'ânic statement at 61:6, "His name is Aḥmad", is a later interpolation is based mainly on two grounds. (1) That Ibn Isḥâq (Ibn Hishâm), while saying that the Syriac expression *Almunhamanna* means "Muḥammad", does not refer to this Qur'ânic passage, though he

1. See for instance Bevan Jones, "Paraclete or Muḥammad" *M.W.*, April, 1920, Vol. 10, pp. 112-125; James Robson, "Does the Bible speak of Muḥammad", *ibid*, January, 1935, Vol. 25, pp. 17-26.

2. A. Gutherie & E.F.I. Bishop, "The Paraclete and Aḥmad", *ibid.*, October, 1951, Vol. 41, pp. 251-256, specially p. 253.

3. W.M. Watt, "His name is Aḥmad", *ibid.*, April, 1953, Vol. 43, pp. 110-117. Watt has recently republished this article in a collection of his essays under caption *Early Islam*, Edinburgh University Press, 1991. In the preface Watt says that in these articles he has elaborated the arguments that are not to be found in his other books.

freely quotes the Qur'ân in appropriate contexts throughout his work. (2) The details in Ibn Isḥâq's passage differ from those in the Qur'ânic passage. For instance, in "the Qur'ân the words are addressed to 'children of Israel': in the work of Ibn Hishâm they are the 'people of the Injîl'."[1]

Now, apart form the obviously slender nature of the arguments thus adduced, it is simply an absurd proposition that the Muslims, in the second or third century of Islam, would interpolate the statement in the Qur'ân by taking their cue form Ibn Isḥâq (d.150/153) or Ibn Hishâm (d.213/218). Moreover, in making such an alleged interpolation they would not certainly use a name by which the Prophet was not known to his contemporaries, and that also instead of the word given as the meaning of *Almunhamanna* by Ibn Isḥâq / Ibn Hishâm.

Realizing these obvious defects in the Gutherie-Bishop suggestion Watt quickly came up with his alternative suggestion. He says that the word *Aḥmad* is used in 61:6 in an adjectival sense, rather than as name, and adds that the object which Gutherie and Bishop "were contending for could be secured by a simpler supposition, namely, that *for the first century of Islam the word aḥmadu was regarded not as a proper name but as an adjective*."[2] Surveying the names of persons obtainable from such works as Ibn Sa'd's *Ṭabaqât*, Ibn al-'Athîr's *'Usd al-Ghâbah* and Ibn Ḥajar's *Tahdhîb al-Tahdhîb* Watt states: "Muslim children were practically never called Aḥmad before about the year 125." He puts his case "even more strongly" thus: "*it is impossible to prove that any Muslim child was called Aḥmad after the Prophet before about the year 125.*"[3] Watt notes that the name "Aḥmad, like Muḥammad, occurred in the jâhiliyah", but this, he says, could not have any reference to the Prophet.[4] Similarly he notes that a poem attributed to Ḥassân ibn Thâbit speaks of an Aḥmad who fell at the battle of Mu'tah; and "an obscure poetess" speaks of a man who counted as false the religion of God and of "the man Aḥmad".[5] But he treats Ḥassân's poem as not authentic and explains away the "obscure" poetess's statement as only "calling the Prophet 'most praised'", and not necessarily by name. Thus guarding himself against

1. *Gutherie* and Bishop, *op. cit.*, pp. 252-254. See also Ibn Hishâm, I., 253.
2. Watt, in *M.W.*, *op. cit.*, 113.
3. *Ibid.*, 110. The italicization is Watt's.
4. *Ibid.*, 111.
5. *Ibid.*, 117.

what he calls "possible early instances of the use of 'Aḥmad'" Watt stipulates that "an opponent" who intends to refute his theory "would not merely have to produce some Aḥmads in the first and early second century, but would have to show, or at least make it seem probable, that in each case the name was given with reference to the Prophet and was not just a continuation of the pre-Islamic usage."[1]

The stipulation is clearly exceptional; which perhaps betrays an awareness of a three-fold basic weakness of the theory as a whole . It seems to recognize, in the first instance, that the works consulted deal only with certain specified classes of people and are not a register of the names of all Muslims who lived in the first and the first quarter of the second century of Islam. Obviously it is hazardous to conclude from a perusal of these works only that Muslim children were never called Aḥmad before about the year 125. Secondly, the stipulation appears to recognize the unreasonableness of the assumption that while the name Aḥmad was current in pre-Islamic time, "for the first century or so of Islam the word *aḥmadu* was regarded not as a proper name but as a simple adjective." It is not understandable why, if Aḥmad was a name in pre-Islamic time, the expression should have been taken only in an adjectival sense in the first century of Islam or that it was only a continuation of the pre-Islamic usage. The proposition seems to have been rested on the further assumption that the use of the word in the Qur'ânic passage 61:6 is in the adjectival sense. But Watt does not prove this first. On the contrary, he seems to argue from the opposite direction. He first supposes that the word was regarded as a simple adjective in the first centruy of Islam, and then makes this supposition the basis of his further assumption that the Qur'ânic use of the term is therefore adjectival. It may be pointed out that even if it is proved that the Qur'ânic use of the term is in an adjectival sense, that does not necessarily mean that its use in the first century should invariably be in that sense alone, or that it should otherwise be regarded as a continuation of the pre-Islamic usage. Names like 'Abd Allah, Khâlid, Al-'Âṣ, etc. were equally prevalent in pre-Islamic times, and these were subsequently given to Muslim children not as a continuation of the pre-Islamic usage but because their meanings were in conformity with Islamic beliefs. Also, most Muslim names, such as Sa'id, Khâlid, Al-'Âṣ, and the like are "adjectives" as words; but that fact, far from deterring, rather justifies their use as personal names. This brings us to the third inherent weak-

1. *Ibid.*, 111.

ness in Watt's stipulation. Whenever a Muslim child is named Aḥmad or Muḥammad , it is implicitly recognized that this is done in deference to the Prophet's names. Seldom is it expressly stated or recorded that this is the reason for selecting the name. Watt seems to recognize this natural presumption and attempts to circumvent it by making the unusual stipulation mentioned above.

Apart from the above, however, Watt is wrong in all three of his premises, namely, (a) that no Muslim child was called Aḥmad after the Prophet before about the year 125; (b) that the word during this whole period was used only as an adjective and (c) that in the Qur'ânic passage 61:6 it is used in an adjectival sense.

As to the incorrectness of the first challenging assumption, every serious student of the Arabic language is conversant with the name of Al-Khalîl ibn Aḥmad ibn 'Amr, the famous grammarian and founder of the science of Arabic prosody (*'ilm al-'arûḍ*). He was born in 100 H. and died in 170 or 175. In describing his biography Ibn Khallikân specifically states that Al-Khalîl's father, Aḥmad, is said to be the first person who was so named after the Prophet.[1] The claim of his being the *first* bearer of the name after the Prophet does not appear to be quite correct; but there is no doubt that he was so named after the Prophet. And since his son Al-Khalîl was born in 100 H., he (Aḥmad) must have been born in the seventies of the first century of Islam at the latest.

One of the first Muslim children to be named Aḥmad, if not the very first, was Aḥmad ibn Ja'far ibn 'Abî Ṭâlib (al-Hâshimî). Both Ja'far and his wife 'Asmâ' bint 'Umays were among the earliest Muslims and both migrated to Abyssinia where 'Asmâ' gave birth to four sons named respectively 'Abd Allah, 'Awn, Muḥammad and Aḥmad.[2] In view of the zeal and spirit characteristic of the early converts to Islam it cannot be assumed that the naming of their children as 'Abd Allah, Muḥammad and Aḥmad was just a continuation of the pre-Islamic usage. Nor could it be suggested that the use of Aḥmad in this instance was as a simple adjective. On the contrary, there is every reason to believe that they selected the names becuase these were in accord with their newly imbibed Islamic concepts. Particularly the naming of

1. Ibn Khallikân, *Wafayât al-'A'yân* (ed. Dr. Ḥasan 'Abbâs), Vol. I., Beriut (1969?), p. 248.

(ويقال إن أباه أحمد أول من سمي بأحمد بعد رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم)

2. *Al-'Iṣâbah*, nos. 408 and 51 (*Kitâb al-Nisâ'*).

the two youngest sons respectively as Muḥammad and Aḥmad suggests that this was done after the names of the Prophet.

Another very early instance is the naming of 'Abd ibn Jaḥsh's son as Aḥmad. 'Abd and his wife Fari'ah bint 'Abî Sufyân were among the earliest Muslims. The authorities differ as to whether they migrated to Abyssinia; but there is no doubt that 'Abd was among the first couple of Muslims to migrate to Madina. That they named the child after the Prophet is evident from the fact that while singing the praise of the Prophet Fari'ah took special pride in being known as 'Umm Aḥmad (Mother of Aḥmad). 'Abd was similarly better known as 'Abû Aḥmad, and is entered in the *'Iṣâbah* under that surname.[1]

A little later in point of time , but definitely born in the first century of Islam, we get another Aḥmad, who was better known by his *kunya* of 'Abû Ṣakhr. He used to take traditions from Yazîd al-Raqâshî.[2] This latter person died in 110 or 120 H.[3] More such names could be found if the sources are carefully looked into. It should be clear from the instances cited how very unteneble is the claim that hardly any Muslim child was named 'Aḥmad' after the Prophet before about the year 125 H.

Watt rejects the reference to the Prophet as Aḥmad in Ḥassân ibn Thâbit's poem[4] on the ground that these poems are not authentic. The poetical materials in the *sîrah* literature are of course suspect.[5] But Watt himself elsewhere accepts the information contained in such materials as genuine on the ground that apart from the question of the genuineness of such poems, they reflect the actual state of affairs.[6] On the same ground it may be said that the poem of Ḥassân under reference speaks of the Prophet by the very name which he actually bore. For, it is just not reasonable to assume that poems were forged in order to give currency to a new and hitherto unknown name for the Prophet. This is all the more unlikely in the case of the poem under reference because, as Watt says, in it the Prophet "is given an undignified position".[7] Surely in such a composition he would not be given a new name signifying

1. *Ibid.*, no. 10 (*Bâb al-Kunâ*).
2. Ibn Sa'd, I, 436.
3. *Tahdhîb al-Tahdhîb*, XI, 311.
4. See Ibn Hishâm, II, 384-385 for the poem.
5. See W. 'Arafât, "Early Critics of the authenticity of the poetry of the Sîra", *B.S.O.AS.*, XXI (1958).
6. Watt, *M. at M.*, 121.
7. *M.W.*, Vol. 43, p. 117.

that he is the most praised one!

With reference to the other piece of information, i.e., the couplet of an "obscure poetess", as she is called,[1] Watt does not find any "obvious reasons" for considering it unauthentic. But he attempts to explain it away as follows: "It looks then, as if we should have to admit an occasional reference to the Prophet as Aḥmad *in poetry*, for the sake of metre, from his own time onwards... Aḥmad means 'more or most praised' whereas Muḥammad merely means 'praised'. There would be nothing improper in a poet calling the Prophet 'most praised'."[2] Thus Watt admits that it is a contemporary reference in poetry to the Prophet as Aḥmad, but he says that "for the sake of metre" the expression has been inserted here as an adjective for "the person" (*al-mar'*). This explanation is untenable for the simple grammatical reason that if it was intended as an adjective it ought to have been rendered "definite" by prefixing *al* (ال) to it, as the noun, *al-mar'*, which the word is said to qualify, is in the definite form; for the rule of compatibility in respect of definiteness and indefiniteness of both the *mauṣûf* and *ṣifah* is indispensable in Arabic. The expression 'Aḥmad' in the couplet under reference must therefore be taken as a name for the Prophet.

Watt also characterizes the instance as "an occasional reference to the Prophet as Aḥmad" and adds that this was so "from his own time onwards." Yes; Aḥamd was used for the Prophet "from his own time onwards", and this was so used as his name, not as an adjective for him. Watt has not taken the trouble to show that all such uses of the term Aḥmad from the Prophet's time onwards were made for the sake of meeting the requirements of metre and as adjectives! Nor is it correct that it is only at two places in Ibn Hishâm's work that Aḥmad is given as the name of the Prophet in poetry, as Watt would seem to think. The Prophet's name is mentioned as such in at least nine other places in poems as follows:

(1) 'Abû Ṭâlib's poem on the Quraysh leaders' pressure on him to surrender the Prophet to them.[3]

(2) 'Amr ibn al-Jamûḥ's poem on his embracing of Islam.[4]

1. She is 'Umâmah al-Muzayriyyah. The couplet is in connection with the *sariyah* of Sâlm ibn 'Umayr. See Ibn Hishâm, II, 636.

2. Watt, M.W., *op. cit.*, 117.

3. Ibn Hisham, I, 353.

4. *Ibid.*, 453.

(3) A poem which Ibn Isḥâq attributed to ‘Alî ibn ‘Abî Ṭâlib but which Ibn Hishâm says was composed by someone else, regarding the Banû al-Naḍîr.[1]

(4&5) Twice, once in each of the two poems by ‘Abd Allah ibn al-Zib‘arâ, respectively on the battle of ’Uḥud and on his embracing of Islam.[2]

(6,7,8) Thrice, once in each of the three poems of Ka‘b ibn Mâlik al-Anṣâri, respectively on the death of Ḥamzah, on the battle of Khandaq and on the battle of Khaybar.[3] In the last instance he mentions both the names, Aḥmad and Muḥammad, in the poem.

(9) Ḥassân ibn Thâbit al-Anṣârî’s poem on the death of Ḥârithah and Ibn Rawwâḥah.[4]

Again, it is not in poems only, but in Ibn Isḥâq's text as well, that the Prophet's name is mentioned as Aḥmad in at least two places, namely, in a report of Ḥassân ibn Thâbit which Ibn Isḥâq quotes[5] and in his own comments on the Qur’ânic passage 2:40.[6] This passage relates to the 'covenant' made by the Children of Israel. The way in which Ibn Isḥâq uses the name Aḥmad in his comments on this passage leaves no room for doubt that he adopts the name from the Qur’ânic passage 61:6 which speaks of the Israelites' knowledge about the coming of the Prophet "whose name is Aḥmad." Incidentally, this use of the name Aḥmad by Ibn Isḥâq in his text nullifies the assumption of Gutherie and Bishop, which Watt endorses and adopts,[7] that the name Aḥmad was not used by either Ibn Isḥâq or Ibn Hishâm.

Thus, by wrongly assuming that none was called Aḥmad after the Prophet till about the year 125 H. and that till that time the expression was normally taken as an adjective only Watt proceeds to interpret the Qur’ânic passage 61:6. He translates its relevant part as:" announcing the good tidings of a messenger who will come after me whose name is more worthy of praise."[8] Watt says that the standard interpretation of the words *ismuhu aḥmadu* was

1. *Ibid.*, II, 197.
2. *Ibid.*, 142, 419.
3. *Ibid.*, 158, 256 and 349.
4. *Ibid.*, 387.
5. *Ibid.*, I., 159.
6. *Ibid.*, 534.
7. *M.W.*, 1953, Vol. 43, p. 113.
8. *Ibid.* The Arabic text is: ﴿... ومبشراً برسول يأتى من بعدى اسمه أحمد...﴾

not commonly accepted by Muslims until after the first half of the secomd century.[1] In support of this statement he adduces two reasons. He says that Ibn Isḥâq does not mention Aḥmad as the Prophet's name and observes that it cannot be assumed that the historian was unaware of the name, for his contemporary Mûsâ ibn Ya'qûb al-Zâmi' (d.153-158) transmits a tradition recorded by Ibn Sa'd giving Aḥmad as the Prophet's name. "It is therefore conceivable", argues Watt, "that Ibn Isḥâq omitted a reference to the name Aḥmad not because he was ignorant, but because he disapproved of this interpretation of the Qur'ânic verse."[2] Watt's second argument is that Al-Ṭabarî (224-310 H.) in his commentary on 61:6, "though himself giving the orthodox interpretation, is unable to quote any earlier commentator as authority for it", although "he is in the habit of quoting strings of authorities for every slight matter." This means, says Watt, "that he knew of no reputable exegete who held what was in his time the standard and obvious view."[3]

Now, Watt is seriously mistaken in following Gutherie and Bishop and assuming that Ibn Isḥâq omits to refer to the Prophet's name as Aḥmad. As pointed out above,[4] Ibn Isḥâq does use the name Aḥmad and that also in interpreting a Qur'ânic passage (2:40) which reminds the Jews of their pledge and their knowledge about the coming Prophet. There is thus no room for doubt that Ibn Isḥâq used the name and related it to the prophecy about the Prophet.

As regards the argument about Al-Ṭabarî, Watt's approach is based clearly on two mutually exclusive premises. He says that Al-Ṭabarî gives the orthodox interpretation because that "was in his time the standard and obvious view"; yet, because he does not cite any authoirty, there "was no reputable exegete who had held" that view. Needless to point out that no particular interpretation could have been *standardized* and accepted as the "obvious" one if the "reputable" exegetes of the time or of the previous age had not held it or if they had held a different or contrary view. It may also be noted that Al-Ṭabarî does not cite authorities in each and every instance; he generally does so where there are more than one opinion on the point or where the text is difficult and admits of several interpretations. That he does

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ibid.*, 113-114.
3. *Ibid.*, 113.
4. *Supra*, p. 152.

not cite any authority in the present instance means only that there was no difference of opinion about the meaning of the passage in question, neither in his own time nor previously, and that the text is so clear and unambiguous that it does not admit of any other interpretation.

Al-Ṭabarî's omission to cite any authority is in itself no proof that there was previously a different opinion on the point. In fairness to that scholar as well as in justice to his own claim Watt should have cited an earlier authority in support of his interpretation. He does not do so and attempts to prove his case only by a negative approach. But here also he is mistaken. ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Abbâs (d.68H.), "the father of Ḳur'ânic exegesis",[1] in fact interpreted the expression *ismuhu Aḥmad* as "his name is Aḥmad ",[2] about two centuries before Al-Ṭabarî.

In fact the expression *ismuhu* (إسمه) "His name is" is so clear and unequivocal that there can be no other meaning for the clause. It is only Watt who for the first time has advanced the strange suggestion that the word Aḥmad is here an adjecive and that the clause should be translated: "Whose /His/ name is more worthy of praise". This translation is an affront to both the English and Arabic languages. It is a person (or his act or conduct) that is generally spoken of as "praiseworthy" or "more worthy of praise", not *his name*. Hence normally it would be said: He is praisworthy or more worthy of praise". No one would say: "His name is praiseworthy". If it is so said, it means his *name* as such is Praiseworthy", that is "He is Mr. Praiseworthy or Mr. More Praiseworthy." The statement would thus be taken as giving the person's name, though that name is an adjective *as a word*.

Apart from the question of English usage, however, Watt's translation grossly violates the recognized rules of Arabic grammar. In Arabic adjectives of comparative or superlative degrees take one of three forms only—the form of *iḍâfah*, for instance *huwa afḍalu-hum* (He is the best of them); the form of simple comparaison by the use of *min*, for instance *huwa afḍalu minhu* (He is better than he) and the form of defieniteness by prefixing *al* to the adjective, for instance , *huwa al-afḍalu* (He is the best). The

1. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edn., Leiden, 1986, p. 40.

2. *Tanwîr al-Miqbâs min Tafsîr ibn ‘Abbâs*, Al-Maktabat al-Sha‘biyah. n.d., p. 469. Among other prints, this work was printed at Bombay in 1280 H. (reprinted 1320), followed by the Bûlâq print at Cairo in 1290 H. (reprinted 1863, 1867 A.C.) and at Iṣtânbûl in 1317 H. It has also been reprinted at the margin of Al-Suyûtî's *Al-Durr al-Manthûr*, Al-Mataba‘ah al-Azhariyyah, 1302, 1316, 1322 and 1344 H.

principle underlying all these forms is that the object with which comparison is made must be either expressed or understood from the context. In the case where *al* is used, it is generally one of superlative degree and here the object with which comparison is made may be expressed or implied. In all cases where exception to the above mentioned rules are made, the object with which comparison is made is either universally known or is too evident from the context to need any mention of it. Such is not the case in the passage under discussion. Watt's translation thus overlooks and violates the accepted rules of the language and is simply grammatically inadmissible, the more so as he puts it in the comparative degree—his"name is more worthy of praise". More in relation to what or whose name? No other previous messenger of Allah nor any historical figure bore the name "Praiseworthy". In fact Watt simply confuses the meaning of the name, Aḥmad, with the meaning of the passage. If Aḥmad in the clause was meant to be an adjective, and not a name, it would have been either prefixed with the definite article *al* or would have been followed by *min* and an object to it; or it would have been framed in the form of an *iḍâfah* adding some expression to the adjective as *muḍâf'ilayhi*.

On the basis of his untenable assumptions and wrong translation Watt proceeds to reconstruct what he calls "the course of events" as follows. He says that in order to meet "Christian criticisms of Islam some Muslims were looking for predictions of Muḥammad in the Christian scriptures" and noticed the passage Jn.XIV-XVI. Watt further says that possibly reflection on the Qu'ânic passage 61:6 "first set a convert from Christianity, with a slight knowledge of Greek, on the track of the argument about similarity of meaning" which was based "on the confusion of *parakletos* with *periklutos*." Therefore though *aḥmadu* in the Qur'ânic passage was hitherto "normally taken as an adjective", it was now taken as a name because it was a familiar pre-Islamic name and because a link would thus be established with the Christian scriptural passage, making the argument particularly convincing for the Muslims who were "more familiar with their own scriptures." And once adopted, the name soon became popular.[1]

We need not here enter into the controversy over *parakletos* and *periklutos*. It would suffice to point out the flaws in Watt's above mentionted statements. The Qur'ân makes repeated claims that the coming of a Prophet

1. *M.W.*, Vol. 43, pp. 114-115.

had been foretold in the previous scriptures and that Muḥammad (ﷺ) was that much awaited Prophet. Muslims did not therefore have to wait for Christian criticisms of Islam to appear on the scene in the second century of Islam in order to make them eager to look for those predictions in the Christian scripture. Natural inquisitiveness and the need for exegesis of the Qur'ân would have started the process of finding confirmation in that scripture. Nor did Christian criticisms of Islam delay their appearance till the second century of Islam. And since, as Watt himself states, "Muḥammad is just as good a translation of *periklutos* as Aḥmad", and since the latter word, even if taken as an adjective, equally well answers the description of the Prophet, there was no need for the Muslims to take their cue from the pre-Islamic use of the word as a name and to come forward with the novel declaration that Aḥmad also was the Prophet's name. Such an innovation would have caused a serious controversy in the ranks of the Muslims themselves, praticularly if, as Watt would have us believe, the expression in 61:6 had hitherto been "normally taken as an adjective". Watt's laboured assumption and interpretation is simply a reiteration, in another form, of the long-exploded view of Muir mentioned above, namely, that the name Aḥmad for the Prophet became popular with the Muslims in their confrontation with the Christians and Jews.

III. THE INSINUATION OF EPILEPSY AND OTHER REMARKS

With reference to the incident of *shaqq al-ṣadr* some orientalists have made the wildest insinuation that the Prophet was, since his boyhood, a lifelong patient of epilepsy or "falling disease". The insinuation originated with the Greeks and was then taken up by subsequent writers. Some of them, as Syed Ahmed Khan points out, even misread the expression *fa-'alḥiqîhi* (فالحقيه) occurring in the report as *bi-alḥaqqiyyah* (بالحقيه) and then strangely translated it as "the Hypochondriacal disease".[1] William Muir, when he composed his work, was obviously influenced by the misconception of his predecessors. Hence referring to the incident he says that it was "probably a fit of epilepsy" and writes:[2]

"If we are right in regarding the attacks which alarmed Halima as fits of a nervous or epileptic nature, they exhibit in the constitution of Mahomet the

1. Syed Ahmed Khan, *Essays on the Life of Muḥammad*, (London, 1870), reprinted Delhi, 1981, p. 388.

2. W. Muir, *The Life of Mahomet*, Vol. I., first edition, pp. 21-24. (The quotation is on pp. 23-24).

normal marks of those excited states and ecstatic swoons wich perhaps suggested to his mind the idea of inspiration, as by his followers they were undoubtedly taken to be evidence of it."

To support this theory of epilepsy Muir cites in a foot-note to his text the work of Ibn Hishâm (Ibn Isḥâq); but disregarding the fact that in Wustenfeld's edition of that work[1] as also in all other editions the material expression in the report is *'uṣîba* (أصيب), Muir reproduces it as *'umiba* (أميب), which is apparently a strange and meaningless expression. He then gives out its meaning as "had a fit".[2] If he had in fact followed a faulty manuscript or printed copy of the work, it would have been proper to refer to that. Muir did not do so. On the contrary, when Syed Ahmed Khan pointed out in 1870 this gross mistake on Muir's part,[3] the latter simply omitted the foot-note in question from the subsequent edition of his book without altering or modifying his assertion, for which the foot-note had originally been given as evidence. Thus, even though the mistake and misuse of the source were pointed out, the allegation was persitently advanced.[4]

It may be noted that in none of the reports concerning the incident of *shaqq al-ṣadr* is it mentioned that the boy Muḥammad (ﷺ) was seen unconscious or in a fit of epilepsy. Again, none of the reports relates the incident with the physical stresses and strains that sometimes attended the coming of revelation to the Prophet much later in his life. Yet Muir, following his predecessors, has done so and has made the unwarrantable observation that the "fits of a nervous or epileptic nature" were "the normal marks" in the constitution of Muḥammad (ﷺ) of "those excited states and ecstatic swoons which perhaps suggested to his mind the idea of inspiration, as by his followers they were undoubtedly taken to be evidence of it." Such a mixing up of two entirely different affairs is not at all supported by the texts and is rather indicative of two distinct attitudes. It betrays, on the one hand, an awareness of the inadequacy of the various reports about *shaqq al-ṣadr* as basis for the assumption of epilepsy. Hence a sort of supporting evidence is sought by giving a twist to the circumstances that occasionally attended the coming of revelation to the Prophet. On the other hand it betrays a confusion, or rather

1. Gottingen, 1858.
2. Muir, *op.cit.*, first edition, p. 21, n.
3. Syed Ahmad Khân, *op.cit.*, p. 386.
4. See for instance Muir, *op.cit.*, third edition, London, 1894, pp. 5-7.

an intention to create confusion, about the nature of revelation and thereby the nature of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) Prophethood. This latter attitude in fact appears to be the more fundamental in the whole approach to the subject. Hence many a subsequent orientalist, though not accepting the theory of epilepsy, has taken over the implication of Muir's above noted remarks and has attempted to explain the phenomenon of revelation (وحى) in terms of what is called Muḥammad's (ﷺ) "consciousness", that is, what he thought or "sincerely" believed to be "inspiration" but which was nonetheless not from God.[1] This point will be taken up for further discussion at a later stage of this work.[2] Here it must be pointed out, however, that Muslims do not take the so-called "excited states and ecstatic swoons" as evidence of inspiration, as Muir asserts.

The theory of epilepsy or of any such ailment cannot be sustained, neither on historical nor on rational and medical grounds. It is evident from all the available accounts that the Prophet possessed and retained till his death an uncommon physical and mental health and resourcefulness. Nor did he ever exhibit any sign of debility and degeneration of body and mind which, by the common verdict of past and present medical science, are the unavoidable effects of epilepsy or hysteria. Not that this fact is quite unknown to the protagonists of the insinuation. Muir himself notes: "It is probable that, in other respects, the constitution of Mahomet was rendered more robust".[3] Yet Muir and his followers would persist in advancing the insinuation.

Thus Margoliouth, while recognizing that some of the signs of epilepsy including degeneration of the brain power were wanting in the case of the Prophet, nonetheless echoes Muir not only in reiterating the allegation but also in relating the alleged fits of epilepsy with the process of the coming of revelation. Margoliouth even adds that the Prophet had developed the skill of "artificially" inducing the symptoms in order to "produce" revelations! He writes: "... the notion current among Christian writers[4] that he was subject to epilepsy finds curious confirmation in the notices recorded of his experiences during the process of revelation — the importance of which is not lessened by the possibility that the symptoms were often artifically induced."[5] The insinuation thus developed by Muir and Margoliouth has

1. *Infra*, Chap. XX, sec. I.
2. *Infra*, Chap. XX, secs.II & III.
3. Muir, *op.cit*, Vol. I., 1st edition, p. 24; third edition, p. 7.
4. Here Margoliouth cites Nöldeke, *Gesch. d. Korans*, 18.
5. Margoliouth, *Mohammed and the rise of Islam*, third edition, London, 1905, pp. 45-46.

been reiterated by many a subsequent writer. Mention may be made particulary of Richard Bell who, while giving his support to the allegation, lists all the leading orientalists who have made it and also relates it mainly to the process of revelation.[1] As Muir is the main propagator of the calumny in modern times and as the others have merely followed his suit without adding any valid reason for the assumption, no separate analysis of their views is called for.

Of the other incident of the Prophet's childhood special attention is paid by the orientalists to his meeting with Baḥîra while journeying to Syria along with his uncle because it shows in a way the Prophet's contact early in his life with a Christian monk and thus it tends to support their theory that he had acquired a previous knowledge of Christianity in various ways and that he made use of that knowledge when he gave himself out as a Prophet. They would even inflate this reported meeting with Baḥîra into several sessions of tuition and learning in the doctrines and scriptures of Christianity, though in none of its forms the report gives the impression of anything more than a very brief meeting and an incidental discussion mainly on the topic of the scriptural prophecy about the coming of the Messenger.

The quesuion of the Prophet's having allegedly borrowed his information from the Christian and Jewish sources will be dealt with at a later stage in this work.[2] Here it may only be pointed out that the orientalists's use of this incident of the meeting with Baḥîra is defective in two main respects. In the first place, they accept only a part of the report relating to the incident and reject the other part because that part goes against their point of view. The main theme of the report, indeed the whole rationale of Baḥîra's having entertained the Quraysh party, his having talked to the boy Muḥammad (ﷺ) and his having asked 'Abû Ṭâlib to take the boy back home was his (Baḥîra's) knowledge of the scriptural forecasts about the coming of a Prophet and his recognition of the "signs" of that Prophet in the boy. An acceptance of the report as a whole would imply an acknowledgement not only of the existence of such forecasts in the Christian scripture but also of the fact that knowledge of such forecasts was prevalent among the Christian priestly circle in the then Arab world. Yet, the orientalists would not concede

1. R. Bell. *Introduction to the Qur'an*, Edinburgh University Press, 1953, p. 30 ff.
2. *Infra*, chapter XI.

even such an awareness and knowledge on the part of Baḥîra and his like. Muir would even attempt to explain away this fact, as noted earlier, by arbitrarily assuming mistake or forgery on the part of some designing monk! They would thus ignore or skip over the main part and essence of the story and would instead concentrate on an incidental aspect, namely, Baḥîra's conversation with the Prophet as a boy, and would build upon it the theory of the latter's contact with and acquirement of Christian knowledge.

Secondly, as in the case of the report concerning *shaqq al-ṣadr*, so in this case also, the orientalists, particularly Muir, make use of the report although they entertain serious doubts about its genuineness. Thus Muir, in an extensive footnote to his text in the first edition, castigates the report regarding Baḥîra as fabulous and full of "so many absurdities"[1]. But then, perhaps realizing that what he wrote in the footnote militated against his assumptions in the text, omits the footnote from the subsequent edition of his work without, of course, altering the text.

Muir even conjures up this journey as a full-fledged study tour or exploratory expedition on the Prophet's part. Thus, projecting the impression an educated adult traveller would get, Muir imagines the Prophet's having noticed all the historical and archaeological sites in that part of the Arab world and states:[2]

"The expedition... afforded to the young Mahomet opportunities of observation, which were not lost upon him. He passed near to Petra, Jerash, Ammon, and other ruinous sites of former mercantile grandeur; and the sight, no doubt deeply impressed upon his reflective mind the instability of earthly greatness... On this journey too he passed through several Jewish setlements, and came in contact with the national profession of Christianity in Syria... However fallen and materialized may have been the Christianity of that day in Syria, it must have struck the thoughtful observer in favourable and wonderful contrast with the gross and unspiritual idolatry of Mecca."

The above is undoubtedly an enjoyable literary piece, but hardly a sober and credible account of what actually transpired. We would rather be inclined to think that as it was a journey made by a tarde caravan over a considerably long and not too hospitable land route, the party must have care-

1. Muir, *op.cit.*, 1st edn., 35-36.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34 (3rd edition, pp. 10-11).

fully avoided making excursions to such commercially unprofitable sites as deserted habitations, ruined townships or sombre church assemblages.

CHAPTER VII

ADOLESCENCE AND YOUTH

I: GLIMPSES OF HIS ACTIVITIES

Muḥammad (ﷺ) grew up under the care and affection of his uncle 'Abû Ṭâlib and continued to live as a member of his household till the age of twenty-five. Like the other children of the family, especially his cousins, he naturally took part in its affairs and activities. The most important occupations of the Makkan society at that time were trade and tending of sheep, goats and camels. That Muḥammad (ﷺ) in his early life used to tend sheep in the valleys of Makka is known from his own statements; for, even when undisputed leader of his people he was not ashamed of speaking about his modest position in early life. Thus a tradition reported by 'Abû Hurayrah says that once the Prophet remarked that there was no Prophet who had not tended sheep, and when asked whether he himself had done so he replied that he had.[1] Several other traditions, narrated by different Companions of the Prophet state to the same effect, some of them specifically mentioning Ajyâd as one of the places in Makka where he used to tend sheep.[2] It is also stated that while shepherding he sometimes used to pluck the fruits of *'arâk*, a kind of wild plant.[3]

Whether he tended sheep for others in order to earn money is not clear. The question revolves mainly round the interpretation of the tradition which says that he used to tend sheep "for the people of Makka at (or for) *qarârîṭ*."[4] Some have taken the expression *qarârîṭ* as the name of a place; but since no place in or near Makka is known by that name, others have taken it to be the plural of *qîrâṭ* a denomination of money. The difficulty is not fully resolved, however, by this interpretation; for no coin by the name *qîrâṭ* was in circulation in Arabia at that time.[5]

The tending of sheep in his adolescence undoubtedly made Muḥammad

1. *Bukhârî*, no. 2262; *Ibn Mâjah*, no. 2149; *Muwaṭṭa'*, K54 / B6/ H18; Ibn Sa'd, I, 125.

2. Ibn Sa'd, I, 126.

3. *Bukhârî*, no. 3453; *Muslim*, no. 2050; *Musnad*, III, p. 326; Ibn Sa'd, I, 125-126.

4. *Bukhârî*, 2262; *Ibn Mâjah*, no. 2149. It may be noted that the material part of the text differs in these two sources. In the former it is: (كنت أرعاها على قراريط لأهل مكة) ; and in the latter it is: (كنت أرعاها لأهل مكة بالقراريط).

5. See for discussion *Al-Ḥalabî*, I, 205-206.

(ﷺ) well acquainted with the desert life as well as with the urban environment in which he grew up. The experience stood him in good stead when the time came for his mission and struggle. It is also not unlikely that the vast expanses of nature, the seemingly endless deserts, the bare and steep mountains relieved by deep vales and other solitary scenes in which he moved about, and the clear blue sky appearing like a big dome and studded with stars at dusk must have made deep impressions upon his mind, for he was thoughtful, reserved, extremely intelligent and remarkably discerning since his early life.

Although taking part in the work and affairs of the family like the others, he was quite unlike his compeers in character, temperament and deportment. It is on record that though living amidst an absorbing idolatry and a society immersed in superstitions and bedevilled by the vices commonly associated with an unbridled indulgence in wine and women, he steered his life clear of all the blemishes and abominable acts. Al-Ṭabarî reproduces a report on the authority of Ibn Isḥâq which says that while tending sheep with other boys the Prophet twice thought of enjoying the night-life of Makka but that on both occasions he was saved from the pitfall by divine intervention in that he was overtaken by sleep before he could even reach the place.[1] Ibn Kathîr rightly points out that this is a very strange and unusual report and says that the reporter has probably mixed up his own affair with that of the Prophet.[2]

II. ABSTINENCE FROM POLYTHEISTIC PRACTICES

Since his boyhood the Prophet developed a strong abhorrence of the polytheistic rites and practices of his people and did never participate in any polytheistic worship or festival. It is reported by 'Umm Hânî, the family maid, that once 'Abû Ṭâlib became rather angry with the boy Muḥammad (ﷺ) for his determined refusal to attend, inspite of repeated askings, an annual festival in honour of an idol.[3] Another report given by 'Umm al-Mu'minîn 'Â'ishah says that she heard the Prophet saying: "I had never tasted anything sacrificed on the altar of an idol even before Allah honoured me with His message."[4] Another tradition narrated by 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar

1. Al-Ṭabarî, *Târîkh*, II, 279 (1126-1127).

2. Ibn Kathîr, *Al-Bidâyah* etc., I-II, 227-278. See also Ibn al-Athîr *Al-Kâmil* etc., I, Beirut, 1987, p. 567.

3. Ibn Sa'd, I., 158.

4. *Al-Ḥalabî*, I, 201.

states that long before the commencement of the mission a meat preparation was once presented before the Prophet, but he refused to partake of it saying that he did not eat of what was sacrificed on altars.[1] A yet another tradition narrated by Zayd ibn Ḥârithah states that the Prophet, even before the receipt of revelation, did not touch the idols placed between Al-Ṣafâ and Al-Marwah, as the Quraysh used to do, while making runs between those points or making circumambulation round the Ka'ba.[2] Again, a tradition reported by 'Alî ibn 'Abî Ṭâlib states: "Once the Prophet was asked: 'Have you ever worshipped an idol?' He replied: 'No'. They asked: 'Have you ever drunk wine?' He replied: 'No; for I knew what they used to do was unbelief, though I was not then aware of the *kitâb* nor of *îmân*."[3]

Indeed, lack of a knowledge of the *kitâb* (Qur'ân) and of the details of *îmân* might be described as his religious state prior to his call to Prophethood. This is what is referred to in the Qur'ânic passage 42:52 which states: "You had not been aware of the book, nor of *îmân*." ﴿... ما كنت تدرى ما الكتـٰب ولا الإيمان...﴾ The same sense is conveyed in a way by the passage 6:161 which runs: "Say, verily my Lord has guided me to the straight path, the upright *dîn*, the true way of 'Ibrâhîm."

﴿قل إننى هدىٰنى ربى إلى صرٰط مستقيم دينا قيمًا ملة إبراهيم حنيفا...﴾

It is with reference to these two passages that the passage 93:7 should be understood. It reads: "And did He not find you away from the path and then guided you?" ﴿ووجدك ضالا فهدى﴾. This passage is indeed the earliest of the three in the order of revelation. It refers to the great mental stress and tension, the spiritual yearning and the consequent anxiety that preceded his receipt of the revelation; as it also indicates the great sense of relief and gratitude which he felt on his attainment of the new enlightenment. None of the three passages could be construed to suggest that prior to his call the Prophet had been astray (*ḍâll*) in the sense of having been engrossed in idolatry. It is worth remembering in this connection that the word *ḍâll*, like many other expressions in the Qur'ân, as elsewhere, has different connotations in different contexts.[4] Apart from abstinence from idolatrous practices

1. *Bukhârî*, no. 3826. See *infra*, Ch. VIII, sec. IV. for further discussion.
2. Al-Ṭabarânî, *Majma'* etc., Vol. 9, p. 418.
3. *Al-Ḥalabî*, I, 204.
4. Three different forms of the word occur in a total of 14 places in the Qur'ân. They are: 1:7; 2:198; 3:90; 6:67; 15:26; 23:106; 26:20; 26:86; 37:69; 56:51; 56:92; 68:26; 83:32 and 93:7. The difference in meanings and implications may be seen by consulting any standard =

the Prophet, like the others of the Quraysh people, used to observe the Abrahamic rites of *ḥajj, 'umrah* and circumambulation of the Ka'ba. Also, like them, he used to keep fasts during the early days of the month of *Muḥarram*, particularly on the *'âshûrâ'* day.[1]

Since his boyhood the Prophet had a keen sense of modesty and propriety. Ibn Isḥâq records an incident in the words of the Prophet himself. "I found myself", he says, "among Quraysh boys carrying stones such as boys play with. We had all uncovered ourselves, each taking his shirt off and putting it round his neck as he carried the stones. I was going to and fro in the same way, when an unseen figure slapped me most painfully saying: 'Put your shirt on'. So I took it and put it on and then began to carry the stones upon my neck, wearing my shirt alone among my fellows."[2] A similar incident is recorded also in connection with the rebuilding of the Ka'ba.[3] Hence Suhaylî is inclined to think that the incident happened to the Prophet more than once.[4] Be that as it may, the report is reminiscent of the fact that the Prophet, even during his boyhood, abstained from exposing his person in the ordinary course of his activities.

As he grew up he was distinguished by his exemplary character, his sincerity, honesty, integrity, truthfulness and trustworthiness. Ibn Isḥâq pithily describes this fact in the following expressive passage:[5]

"Thus the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be on him, grew up, Allah taking care of him, protecting him and keeping him away of the filth of heathenism because He intended to honour him and make him His Messenger, until he grew into manhood and turned out to be the best of his people in manliness, the noblest of them in character, the most respectable in lineage, the best of them as a neighbour, the greatest of them in intelligence, the most truthful, the most reliable and the farthest removed from any debasing practices and conduct, through loftiness and nobility, so that he became known as 'The Trustworthy' because of the good qualities which Allah combined in him."

= commentary on these passages. For instance at 2:198 the word is clearly used in a very narrow sense of those who skipped over the rite at Muzdalifa during pilgrimage. Similarly at 15:56 it is used in the sense of one who has not full confidence in God's mercy and is rather a pessimist. Again, at 68:26, it is used in the ordinary sense of one who is mistaken.

1. See for instance *Bukhari*, no. 2002. See also nos. 2001, 1892.
2. Ibn Hishâm, I, 183; *Al-Ḥalabî*, I, 199.
3. *Bukhârî*, no. 3829.
4. Suhaylî, I, 208-209.
5. Ibn Hishâm, I, 183.

III. THE *FIJÂR* WARS

Two notable events during the Prophet's early youth were the *Fijâr* or Sacrilegious Wars and the conclusion of the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* or the Pious Pact.

The *Fijâr* wars took place when the Prophet was roughly between fourteen and twenty years of age. There were in fact a series of some four consecutive wars extending over a period of not less than five years. These were called *Fijâr* or sacrilegious wars because they were started or fought in the sacred month of Dhû al-Qa'dah when a breach of the peace and carrying out of inter-tribal hostilities was traditionally considered a sacrilegious act. The wars originated at the famous 'Ukâẓ fair which used to be held annually for the first three weeks of Dhû al-Qa'dah at a place between Ṭâ'if and Nakhla. They were also related in a large measure to tribal ego and a false sense of honour and dignity in protecting and supporting a member or ally of a tribe, be he in the right or wrong. At 'Ukâẓ not only traders and merchants thronged from all parts of the peninsula with their merchandize and wares, but also poets, musicians, magicians, dancers and other entertainers came to exhibit and make money out of their respective skills. One of the main cultural features of the fair was a sort of national competition among the poets of the various tribes who recited their respective compositions, each seeking to establish his own as well as his tribe's prestige and superiority over the others. Naturally, tribal spirit and excitement ran high on such occasions and these often led to a good deal of quarrels, conflicts and bloodshed.

The first *Fijâr* war was occasioned by the boasting at that fair of a person of one tribe who claimed himself to be the most respected individual among all the Arabs and then his being challenged in that claim and struck with a sword by an equally headstrong person of another tribe. The second and the third wars broke out, respectively, over the insulting of a woman of one tribe by a man of another tribe and over the question of settling the debt owed by a person of one tribe to a person of another tribe. The fourth, i.e., the last war broke out over a more serious affair. Nu'mân ibn Mundhir, king of Ḥîra, wanted to send his trade caravan to the 'Ukâẓ fair and looked for a suitable guarantor (*kafîl*) for that purpose. Barrâḍ ibn Qays of Banû Kinânanh of Makka and 'Urwah ibn 'Utbah of Banû Hawâzin of Ṭâ'if contested for getting the assignment which doubtless carried a commission for the guarantor. Nu'mân ultimately selected 'Urwah as the guarantor. Stung at this dis-

comfiture Barrâḍ waylaid 'Urwah and killed him.[1] In the fightings that consequently broke out over this affair the Quraysh and Kinânah tribes along with their allies were ranged against the Hawâzin and Qays tribes and their allies. The war continued for four years, with long intermissions, the fightings taking place mainly at the time of the fair, and victory alternating between the contending sides. Ultimately the hostilities were brought to an end by an agreement which provided that the side of whom a greater number of people had been killed in the course of the fightings should get compensation for the excess number of their dead people.

According to Ibn Isḥâq the Prophet was twenty years of age when the last *Fijâr* war took place.[2] Ibn Hishâm, however, puts the age at 14 or 15 and further says that on one of the "days" of the war the Prophet was taken by his uncles to the battlefield. He further records a report which represents the Prophet as saying: "I used to return to them (my uncles) the arrows thrown at them by their enemies."[3]

Ibn Hishâm dose not mention any authority for this particlular saying of the Prophet. Taking Ibn Hishâm's statement as it is, the following points emerge from it. (a) It appears that the Prophet did not himself go to the battlefield but his uncles "took" him there with them. (b) This fact of his uncles' *taking* him there shows that he was hardly a young man to act independently or to actively participate in the fightings. (c) His role there was in the nature of a camp-follower, being limited to the task of collecting and returning to his uncles the arrows thrown at them by their enemies (obviously for their reuse by his uncles).

Al-Wâqidî, a senior contemporary of Ibn Hishâm, gives a version of this incident which appears to be a combination of the statements of Ibn Isḥâq and Ibn Hishâm. Thus, obviously following Ibn Isḥâq, Al-Wâqidî states that the Prophet was 20 years old at the time and then, like Ibn Hishâm, quotes the Prophet as saying: "I was present at it (i.e. the *Fijâr* war) with my uncles and threw arrows in it. I wish I had not done so."[4]

1. See for details Muḥammad ibn Ḥabîb al-Baghdâdî (d. 245 / 859), *Kitâb al-Munammiq Fî Akhbâr Quraysh* (ed. Khurshid Aḥmad Fârîq), Beirut, 'Âlam al-Kutub, 1405 h / 1985, pp. 160-185. See also Ibn Hishâm, I., 184-185.

2. *Ibid.*, 186.

3. *Ibid.*

4. Ibn Sa'd, I, 128. The Arabic text runs as follows:

(قد حضرته مع عمومتي ورميت فيه بأسهم وما أحب أني لم أكن فعلت)

Like Ibn Hishâm, again, Al-Wâqidî does not cite any authority for this report. This omission on his part is all the more striking in view of the fact that in the same place and dealing with the same topic he gives the *isnâd* in full for the statement of Ḥakîm ibn Ḥizâm who says that he saw the Prophet being present at the *Fijâr* War.[1] Significantly enough, this statement of Ḥizâm does not make any mention of the Prophet's either collecting or throwing arrows. In view of these discrepancies in the reports it is difficult to be sure about the exact nature of the Prophet's role in the battle. Clearly, the two different versions of the Prophet's reported saying given by Ibn Hishâm and Al-Wâqidî cannot both be at the same time an accurate report of what he said, if he did at all, on the subject.

IV. THE *ḤILF AL-FUḌÛL*

Closely following the termination of the *Fijâr* Wars was concluded a pact known as *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl*. It was not a direct sequel to those wars but it evidently grew out of that good sense which had brought it to an end and which recognized the baneful effects of the lack of security and lawlessness that generally prevailed in the land. The immediate occasion for the conclusion of the pact was that Al-'Âṣ ibn Wâ'il of Banû Sahm of Makka obtained goods from a visitsing Yamanî (Zibaydî) trader but did not pay him the value for them. The latter appealed to the *Aḥlâf*, a group formed earlier by Banû 'Abd al-Dâr, Banû Makhzûm, Banû Jumaḥ, Banû Sahm and Banû 'Adiyy ibn Ka'b,[2] obviously because Al-'Âṣ ibn Wâ'il belonged to that group. The *Aḥlâf* however, declined to intervene in the matter. Hence the aggrieved Yamanî took his case before the general body of the Quraysh who used to assemble at the Ka'ba compound. There his cause was taken up by Zubayr ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, an uncle of the Prophet (full brother of 'Abd Allah), at whose instance the leaders of Banû Hâshim, Banû al-Muṭṭalib, Banû Zuhrah, Banû Asad and Banû Taym met at the house of 'Abd Allah ibn Jud'ân of the last mentioned clan and one of the richest, if not the richest man of the city. The latter offered a grand feast on the occasion. There the leaders and those of their followers who were present there entered into a pact solemnly undertaking:

(a) to protect and support the oppressed;

(b) to restore to the rightful owner any property of which he was wrongly

1. *Ibid.*
2. See *Supra*, pp. 38-39.

deprived or dispossessed; and

(c) to oppose injustice and to get justice done to the aggrieved party,

irrespective of tribe and clan affiliations of the parties involved, or of their social position, or of their domicile.[1]

Because of this noble object of the pact it came to be known as *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* or "Pact of the Pious". Another explanation given for the name is that it was so called because it aimed at taking from a person such property as he held in excess (i.e. *fuḍûl*) of his rightful claim to it. A third view is that it was so called because three of those who were active behind its formation had each *Faḍl* for his name, (i.e. Al-Faḍl ibn Fuḍâlah, Al-Faḍl ibn Wadâ'ah and Al-Faḍl ibn al-Ḥârith), *fuḍûl* being the plural of *faḍl*. Yet another explanation would have us believe that it was so called because those who did not like its formation scornfully remarked that the confederates had bothered themselves with an unnecessary (*fuḍûl*) affair.[2]

It must be observed that the three last mentioned explanations are not in accord with the context in which the pact came into being. That it was a league against injustice and was properly so called is clear not only from the background against which it was formed but also from its subsequent performances. The story of three *Faḍls* being active in bringing it into existence is not supported by the well-known facts that Zubayr ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and 'Abd Allah ibn Jud'ân were the moving spirits behind its formation. Similarly the explanation of the name with reference to the "excess" or wrongful possession only confirms the real object of the pact. Again the casual and rueful remark of an ill-disposed group could not have bestowed upon the pact a name by which it attained celebrity in the annals of the people.

That there was a group of clans who did not like its formation nor did apparently subscribe to its objectives is evident not only from the facts connected with the formation of the *Ḥilf* but also from Ibn Isḥâq's description of it immediately after his treatment of the differences that developed in the ranks of the Quraysh after Quṣayy's death and the consequent division of the clans into two distinct groups, the *Aḥlâf* and the *Muṭayyabûn*,[3] and not after

1. Al-Baghdâdî, *Kitâb al-Munammiq etc.*, *op.cit.*, pp. 186-188. See also Al-Mas'ûdî, *Murûj etc.*, II, 276-277; Ibn Hishâm, I, 133-135; Suhaylî, I, 155-156; Ibn al-Athîr, *Al-Kâmil etc.*, I, 570-571; Ibn Kathir, *Al-Bidâyah etc.*, I-II, (II), 290-293; *Al-Ḥalabi*, I, 211-215.

2. *Ibid.*, 214.

3. See *Supra*, pp. 38-39.

his description of the Prophet's early life, though from the facts stated by him elsewhere and from the other sources it is clear that the *Ḥilf* came into being shortly after the conclusion of the *Fijâr* War. The Prophet himself indicates that it was a pact mainly of the *Muṭayyabûn* group of clans.[1] This is also a generally acknowledged fact.[2]

The formation of *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* was undoubtedly a significant development in that the confederate clans, whatever their other considerations, raised themselves above mere clan spirit and local considerations and came forward to live and act up to a higher principle for the common good. More significant is the fact that the Prophet, who was then just stepping into manhood, was present at the conference at 'Abd Allah ibn Jud'ân's house and participated in the formation of the league.[3] It is his first recorded participation in a public act and he remembered it as an important event in his life. He is reported to have remarked, much later in his life and after the establishment of Islam, that even then if any oppressed person sought his help in the name of the *Ḥilf* he would gladly extend it.[4] It is mainly with reference to it that he also said that though there was no further need for any pact (*ḥilf*) in Islam, whatever had been concluded before the coming of Islam was confirmed and strengthened by it.[5]

The *Ḥilf* was successful in its immediate objective. After concluding the pact the leaders went to Al-'Âṣ ibn Wâ'il and made him return the goods to the Yamanî merchant. This fact shows that the group proved to be a powerful factor in the social life of the city and could assert itself against the *Aḥlâf* clans. It is also on record that shortly afterwards a man of Banû Khath'am came to Makka on *ḥajj* or *'umrah* bringing with him his beautiful daughter. An inhabitant of Makka named Nubayh ibn al-Ḥajjâj forcibly took away the girl for an evil purpose. The poor father cried at the Ka'ba compound invoking help of the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl*. Immediately the leaders of the confederate clans came forward well-armed and forced the miscreant to

1. *Musnad*, I, 190.
2. *Al-Ḥalabî*, I, 214.
3. Ibn Hishâm, I, 134; *Musnad*, I, 190, 193.
4. Ibn Hishâm, I, 134; Suhaylî, I, 155-156, 158.
5. See *Musnad*, I, 190, 193; II, 180, 207, 212-213, 215; III, 281; IV, 83; V, 61; *'Abû Dâ'ud*, no. 2909; *Dârimî*, II, p. 243; *Ṭayâlisî*, no. 1084.

(كل حلف كان في الجاهلية لم يزده الإسلام إلا شدة أو حدة)

restore the girl to her father.[1] Indeed the *Ḥilf* continued to be a living force after the establishment of Islam. As late as the time of *Khalîfah* Mu'âwiyyah his governor of Madina, Al-Walîd ibn 'Utbah, was obliged to pay what he owed to Al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alî when he threatened to invoke the *Ḥilf* for obtaining his right and when 'Abd Allah ibn al-Jubayr announced his support for Al-Ḥusayn.[2]

V: SECOND JOURNEY TO SYRIA AND MARRIAGE WITH KHADÎJAH

The formation of the *Ḥilf al-Faḍûl* indeed marks the Prophet's emergence into public life. He was by then well known for his honesty, integrity, truthfulness, reliability and high moral character so that he was generally called *Al-'Amîn* or "The Trustworthy". Such reputation and public recognition of his character he must have acquired by his day-to-day dealings with his people, especially by his discharge of the trusts and responsibilities that must have been reposed in him from time to time. We have, however, no detailed information about such activities on his part. All that the sources reveal are some indirect and vague allusions to some trading activities on his part in Makka.[3]

It is particularly on record, however, that he made a second journey to Syria, when about twenty-five years of age, leading Khadîjah's trade caravan to that land. Historians have been careful to note this event in some detail obviously because it proved to be a turning point in his life. Yet this very commercial assignment to him presupposes that he had by then some acknowledged experience in such transactions; for, wise and well-experienced as Khadîjah was by all accounts in trade and commerce, she just would not have staked her capital and caravan upon a young man, however honest and just, if she had not been convinced of his abilities and suitability in this respect. Nonetheless it is certain that whatever trading activities he might have been engaged in at Makkah, he had not previously led any other trade caravan to a foreign land. If he had done so, that fact would surely have been referred to by the chroniclers and traditionists at least in connection with this trading mission on behalf of Khadîjah.

Khadîjah was the daughter of Khuwaylid, son of Asad, son of 'Abd al-'Uzzâ, son of Quṣayy, son of Kilâb, son of Murrah. Her ancestry thus met

1. *Al-Ḥalabî*, I, 221-222.
2. Ibn Hishâm, I, 134-135.
3. *Al-'Iṣâbah*, IV, pp. 111-112; V, p. 60; *Al-Mustadrak*, III, p. 637.

with that of the Prophet in Quṣayy. At the time she was about forty years of age. She had been previously married successively to two persons, both of whom had died leaving a couple of children for her. She still retained her health, youth and beauty. Her real beauty lay, however, in her character and conduct. She lived all through a pure and chaste life, singularly free from all the blemishes of her city and society. For that reason every person, friend and foe, high and low, used to refer to her respectfully as *Al-Ṭâhirah*, "The pure Lady". To this sterling quality she added a rare wisdom, a penetrating understanding of men and of affairs and a practical business acumen. She also owned a considerable fortune, partly inherited but mainly multiplied by skilful management of her business. It is stated that her business wares and caravan almost equalled, if not surpassed, those of all the other Quraysh traders of Makka at that time. Naturally she was the most respected and no less coveted lady of the city.

It is stated by Ibn Isḥâq that Khadîjah, hearing of the character and capabilities of Muḥammad (ﷺ) contacted him through his uncle, 'Abû Ṭâlib, and requested him to lead her trade caravan to Syria, offering him double the remuneration she used to pay others.[1] Muḥammad (ﷺ), in consultation with his uncle and well-wisher 'Abû Ṭâlib, accepted this offer and led her caravan to Syria, accompanied as an assistant by Maysara, a servant of Khadîjah's.

As in the case with his first travel to Syria in company with his uncle, so also in connection with this second travel, the historians have narrated the story of another monk, Nestorius, who lived about the same place where Baḥîra did some twelve or fourteen years before and who is said to have similarly recognized in Muḥammad (ﷺ) the signs of the future Prophet and spoken to him as well as to Maysara to the same effect.[2] It is also stated that Maysara himself noticed two angels (according to another version of the report, clouds) shading Muḥammad (ﷺ) from the sun in the course of his return journey. The authenticity of these reports is of course arguable. Be that as it may, the trading expedition proved unexpectedly successful. The Prophet not only sold Khadîjah's wares at a considerable profit but also obtained with the proceeds goods that on return to Makka fetched her almost double in profit.

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 188.

2. *Ibid.* Also Ibn Sa'd, I, 130; Ibn al-'Athîr, *Al-Kâmil etc.*, I., 569; Al-Ṭabarî, *Târikh*, II, 280 (I / 1128); Ibn Kathîr, *Al-Bidâyah etc.*, II, 294.

The contact thus established between Muḥammad (ﷺ) and Khadîjah ultimately led to their marriage. It is not clear whether he carried on any further trade operations on her behalf, but all the accounts state that she gradually became captivated by his personality, character and qualities and that it was she who took the initiative in making the proposal for marriage although she had previously turned down the proposals of several well-to-do Quraysh individuals. She employed her trusted companion and friend Nafisah bint Munîyah to sound Muḥammad (ﷺ) on the subject.[1] She says that when after some preliminary words she raised the question of marriage he expressed his financial insufficiency for marriage at that stage of his life and that when she disclosed her exact mission and the identity of her employer and the proposed bride the Prophet was taken by surprise and remarked: "How could that be for me?" "Leave that to me", Nafîsah answered, whereupon the Prophet signified his consent for her to proceed with the matter. Nafîsah returned to Khadîjah with all satisfaction and communicated to her the results of her mission.[2] Thereafter further negotiations took place between the two sides ending in their marriage on the appointed day. It is stated that the Prophet's uncle, 'Abû Ṭâlib or Ḥamzah, acted as guardian for him on the occasion, while Khadîjah's uncle, 'Amr ibn Asad, acted as guardian on her behalf. She was at that time forty years old, while Muḥammad (ﷺ) was twenty-five years only.[3]

The marriage turned out to be singularly happy and successful. It had continued for twenty-five years when Khadîjah died. During this long period of a quarter of a century, which coincided with the prime of his youth, the Prophet did not take any other wife. All his children except one (Ibrâhîm) were born of Khadîjah. They were two sons, Al-Qâsim and Al-Ṭâhir ('Abd Allah), and four daughters, Zaynab, Ruqayyah, Umm Kulthûm and Fâṭimah. All the sons, including Ibrâhîm who was born of Mâriah at a subsequent date, died in their infancy; while the daughters lived long, embraced Islam and migrated to Madina. Two of the daughters were at first betrothed respectively to two sons of 'Abu Lahab; but their marriages did not go through

1. Ibn Sa'd, I, 131.
2. *Ibid*. Nafîsah's statement runs as follows:

(فأرسلتني دسيسا إلى محمد بعد أن رجع في عيرها من الشام، فقلت: يا محمد ما يمنعك أن تزوج؟ فقال ما بيدي ما أتزوج به، قلت: فإن كفيت ذلك ودعيت إلى الجمال والمال والشرف والكفاءة ألا تجيب؟ قال فمن هي؟ قلت: خديجة: فقال: وكيف لي بذلك؟ قالت قلت: علي، قال: فأنا أفعل، فذهبت فأخبرتها)

3. *Ibid*.

because of the ill-feelings and opposition of the latter's wife, Umm Jamîl ('Abû Sufyân's sister). Ultimately Zaynab was married to 'Abû al-'Âṣ ibn al-Rabî' (ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzâ ibn 'Abd Shams ibn 'Abd Manâf).[1] Ruqaiyyah and 'Umm Kulthûm were successively married to 'Uthmân ibn 'Affân, one after the death of the other; while Fâṭimah was married to 'Alî ibn 'Abî Ṭâlib.

The marriage with Khadîjah relieved Muḥammad (ﷺ) of his uneasy financial circumstances. Henceforth he left the household of his uncle 'Abû Ṭâlib and started living independently with Khadîjah. She placed all her wealth and resources at his command. This undoubtedly afforded him a comparatively easy and contented life. This favourable change in his circumstances is clearly alluded to in the Qur'ân, 93:8, "Did He not find thee impoverished and then enriched thee?" Historians are, however, completely silent about his activities for about ten years following his marriage with Khadîjah. We get only an indirect glimpse of what he notably did during this period from the famous report about Khadîjah's immediate reaction and remark when the Prophet, on receipt of the first revelation, came to her in a state of utter bewilderment and fear. She comforted him by saying that Allah could not mean any harm to him because "you always speak the truth, entertain guests, look after the relatives, help and assist the poor and persons in distress" etc.[2] Obviously these were the facts of his day-to-day life and character so that they immediately occurred to her as grounds for assurance and consolation for herself as well as her noble husband at that momentous juncture of their life. There could be no doubt that the Prophet had turned his newly acquired easy circumstances to good account and had distinguished himslef by the good deeds referred to by Khadîjah.

We have information of at least two specific acts of his during the first ten years of his married life that may clearly be classified with the category of benevolent activities mentioned by Khadîjah. The one was his adoption of 'Alî, son of 'Abû Ṭâlib. It is stated that because of a large family and consequent upon a year of drought 'Abû Ṭâlib was passing through a hard time. At this the Prophet approached his uncle 'Abbâs, who was better off, and suggested to him that they both should do something to relieve 'Abû Ṭâlib. Hence both of them went to the latter and persuaded him to allow them to

1. *Al-'Iṣâbah*, IV, p. 121. 'Abû al'Âṣ's mother was Hâlah, a sister of Khadîjah. Hence he was her nephew and Zaynab's cousin.

2. See *Infra*, Ch. XVI, sec.I.

maintain some of his sons. The old man agreed. Thereupon the Prophet took 'Alî, while 'Abbâs took Ja'far. The Prophet brought up 'Alî as his son. He was one of the very first few to embrace Islam and, as indicated above, to him the Prophet subsequently gave his youngest daughter Fâṭimah in marriage.

The other act was the adoption of Zayd ibn Ḥârithah. He was captured as a boy by the enemies of his family or by banditti and was sold by them as a slave at the famous 'Ukâẓ fair where Khadîjah's nephew Ḥakîm ibn Ḥizâm bought him for her at 400 dirhams. On her marriage with the Prophet she presented him the boy servant. The Prophet freed him from all bondage of servitude and treated him with so much fatherly love and affection that people started referring to him as Zayd ibn Muḥammad. Subsequently Zayd's father Ḥârithah and uncle Ka'b, on getting his trace, came to the Prophet and asked his favour for returning their son to them in lieu of the bond money. The Prophet declined the money but allowed complete freedom for Zayd either to stay with him or to return to his family with his father and uncle. Zayd was by that time so impressed by the treatment he had received from the Prophet that he preferred staying with the latter. As a token of further assurance to Zayd's father and uncle the Prophet then went to the Ka'ba compound and publicly announced his adoption of Zayd as a son.[1] For the remainder of his life Zayd stayed with the Prophet and was one of the first few to believe in his Prophethood and to embrace Islam.

VI: RECONSTRUCTION OF THE KA'BA AND THE PROPHET'S ARBITRATION

When about thirty-five years of age the Prophet's character and personality received national confirmation through an event which the historians have understandably taken care to record in some detail. It was the reconstruction of the Ka'ba. Its walls had shown signs of cracks due to flooding by heavy rains. It had also hitherto no roof over it and a thief had lately made away with some treasures kept in it. Hence the Quraysh leaders decided to raise the plinth of the structure, to rebuild its walls to a greater height and to put a roof over them. The plans were facilitated by the availability of a suitable craftsman, an Egyptian copt, at Makka at that time; and also by the wrecking of a Greek ship off the coast of Jedda and the depositing of its timbers on the shore by winds and waves. These timbers were

1. *Al-'Iṣâbah*, I, no. 2889 (p. 563). The relationship by adoption was abolished in Islam.

purchased by the Quraysh leaders for the purpose of making the roof.[1] An advisory role in the plans was played by 'Abû Wahb ibn 'Amr of Banû Makhzûm, a maternal uncle of the Prophet's father 'Abd Allah.[2] The Quraysh clans decided all to share the work of rebuilding the Ka'ba.

The task of reconstruction involved, however, first the demolition of the existing walls; and this task initially occasioned a good deal of hesitation because it was apprehended that such interfering with Allah's house, though well meant, might bring upon the participants in the work of demolition His wrath and retribution. The hesitation was brought to an end, however, by the boldness of Al-Walîd ibn al-Mughîrah who first broke a little of the wall at one corner and then all waited for a night to see if any mischief befell him.[3] As nothing happened to him by that time they all started the work of pulling down the walls. The Quraysh clans organized themselves into four distinct groups, each undertaking to demolish and rebuild one of the four sides of the house. It would be interesting to note this grouping of the clans for this notable public work just five years prior to Muḥammad's (ﷺ) call to Prophethood. It stood as follows:

Clans	*Assignment*
(A) Banû 'Abd Manâf and Banû Zuhrah	The door and wall on that (i.e. east) side.
(B) Banû Makhzûm and some other clans	The wall between the Black Stone & the Yamanî corner.
(C) Banû Jumaḥ and Banû Sahm	The wall opposite the door side (i.e. west).
(D) Banû 'Abd al-Dâr, Banû Asad ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzâ and Banû Ka'b ibn Lu'ayy	The Ḥaṭîm and wall on that side.

The Prophet took part in work of reconstruction of the Ka'ba by carrying stones on his shoulders along with his uncle 'Abbâs.[4] The work of rebuilding progressed as usual but when the walls reached the height where the Black

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 192-193.
2. Ibid., 194.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Bukhârî*, nos. 364, 1582, 3829; *Muslim*, no. 340; *Musnad*, III, 295, 310, 333; V, 454, 455.

Stone needed to be reset in its place differences of opinion developed among the clans. Each of them desired to have the honour of resetting the stone. According to the division of work agreed upon, it would appear that this piece of work would devolve on either or both of the groups A and B indicated above. But opposition was offered to it by the others, particularly by group D who, as Ibn Isḥâq reports, uncompromisingly asserted their claim and dipped their hands in a bowl of blood, thus vowing to lay down their lives in fighting for what they conceived to be a singular honour.[1] The quarrels and stalemate continued for four or five days when, we are told, 'Umayyah ibn Mughîrah of Banû Makhzûm, who was the oldest among all the Quraysh, prevailed upon them to submit the dispute to the arbitration of the person who would be the first in the following morning to enter the Ka'ba compound from a particular side.[2] Fortunately for all of them the man who thus entered the Ka'ba compound turned out to be Muḥammad (ﷺ) and everyone welcomed him exclaiming: "This is the Trusted one; we accept him; he is Muḥammad."[3]

The chosen arbitrator proved himself equal to the occasion. He asked for a piece of cloth to be brought in for the purpose. When this was done he placed the stone on it and asked the leaders of the clans to hold the four sides of the cloth and then all raise the stone to the desired height at the desired spot. When that was done he himself again took the stone and positioned it in its place.[4]

Thus was the dispute resolved, an impending internecine war averted and the clannish ego of the leaders satisfied. Although the story thus furnishes a pleasing end to the drama, it obviously leaves a good deal to be said about the final act in it. It is just not an adequate explanation to say that the disputant clans who had pledged their lives for the sake of gaining the misconceived distinction all of a sudden agreed to stake their chances to the decision of a stranger who would be the first to enter the arena from a certain direction. Definitely a good deal of discussions and consultations had taken place on the subject and about the character and qualifications of the would

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 196-197.

2. *Ibid.* The side indicated was Bâb Banî Shaybah or Banî 'Abd Shams (modern Bâb al-Salâm or Bâb al-Ṣafâ).

3. *Ibid.*, 197. Ibn Isḥâq's words are: (فلما رأوه قالوا : هذا الأمين، رضينا، هذا محمد)

4. *Ibid.* Also *Musnad*, III, 425; *Ṭayâlisî*, No. 113.

be arbitrator. It is also unlikely that Muḥammad (ﷺ), who had himself actively participated in the work of rebuilding the Ka'ba and was in addition an intelligent and respectable member of his society, was unaware of the dispute and the developments connected with it, particularly of the decision to settle it by arbitration, and then became that arbitrator just by chance and on account of his simply being the first person to enter the Ka'ba compound from a certain direction. In any case, it is evident even from the story as it is that the Quraysh leaders welcomed him as the arbitrator not simply because he was the first person thus to enter the arena but clearly and decisively because he was *Al-'Amîn*, the "Trusted One", with proven integrity and reliability, in whose honesty and impartiality everyone had the most unreserved confidence. This is the essence of the whole story. The arbitration unmistakably marked a triumph for Muḥammad's (ﷺ) character and personality over the clan-spirit and family-pride of the Quraysh leaders of the time. It was indeed a national confirmation of his absolutely spotless character, his truthfulness, impartiality and popularity.

The authorities generally agree in saying that the reconstruction of the Ka'ba took place five years prior to the Prophet's receipt of the revelation. This means that up to that time, i.e., till roughly the age of thirty-five he was leading his life as an ordinary and respectable member of the society, taking part in its day-to-day activities, well known for his noble character and truthfulness and liked and trusted by all and sundry. The period of solitary stay and meditation which by all accounts preceded the coming of the revelation had not obviously started till that time. Exactly from which year or date such a noticeable turn in his way of life came is not known; but assuming that it followed not quite long after the reconstruction of the Ka'ba, it may be stated that such a period of solitary stay and contemplation did not exceed four years at the most.

VII: LACK OF FORMAL EDUCATION

Another remarkable aspect of his pre-prophetic life is his non-receipt of any formal education and his inability to read and write. The historians, although they are particular in relating many minor details about the Prophet's life and activities, do not give any indication of his having ever received any education whatsoever during his early life and youth. On the contrary there are a number of the Prophet's own statements to the effect that

he was an unlettered or untutored (*'ummiyy* أميّ) person.[1] Also there are a number of statements in the Qur'ân itself that prove unmistakably that he did neither receive any formal education nor know reading and writing. This fact emerges from the term *'ummiyy* which in its singular and plural forms occurs in a total of six places in the Qur'ân[2] and which means both an illiterate and uneducated person (that is, one who is considered to be in the state of his mother's lap in respect of learning)[3] and also "one who has not received any revealed book".[4] Besides these passages, there are some others in the Qur'ân, e.g., 16:103; 25:4-5 and 29:48, which do not contain the term *'ummiyy* but which clearly prove that the Prophet did not know the art of reading and writing. The implications of these two types of the Qur'ânic passages will be discussed in connection with the orientalists' views about the Prophet's "illiteracy" and also in connection with their allegation that he received his knowledge from an "informant" or " informants" at Makka.[5]

Reference should be made in this connection, however, to the well-known incident in connection with the conclusion of the treaty of Ḥudaybiyah. It is stated that when the terms of the treaty were being written down by 'Alî (r.a.) on behalf of the Prophet, the Quraysh leader Suhayl objected to the expression *Rasûl Allah*, Messenger of Allah, being added to the Prophet's name. Hence the Prophet, in order to facilitate the conclusion of the treaty, asked 'Alî to delete the expression and to write instead simply "the son of 'Abd Allah". But 'Alî, out of understandable zeal and devotion, declined to interfere with the expression *Rasûl Allah*. Hence the Prophet took the paper from him and, according to some versions of the report, asked 'Alî to show the place where the expression was written, and on his being shown it he struck it off and then had the alternative expression "son of 'Abd Allah" written there, as suggested by the Quraysh leader.[6] Other versions state simply that in view of the Quraysh leader's objection to the expression *Rasûl Allah* the Prophet wrote "son of 'Abd Allah" instead.[7] With regard to

1. See for instance *Musnad*, II, 212. (فقال أنا محمد النبي الأمي أنا محمد النبي الأمي ثلاثا)
2. Q. 2:78; 3:20; 3:75; 7:157-158 and 62:2.
3. See *Lisân al-'Arab* under *'umm.*
4. *Infra*, Ch. X, sec.I.
5. *Infra*, Ch. X, sec. III.
6. *Bukhârî*, nos. 2731-2732, 2698, 3184; *Muslim*, nos. 1783-1784; *Musnad*, III, p. 268; IV, pp. 86, 291, 325, 330.
7. *Bukhârî*, no. 4251; *Musnad*, IV, p. 298; *Dârimî*, II, pp. 237-238; *Ṭayâlisî*, no. 713.

these latter versions it has been very aptly pointed out that the statement is to be taken in the sense in which communications written by heads of states and institutions are taken, namely, that they themselves do not write or draft the communications but they are written under their authority.[1] Even these latter versions do not say unequivocally that the Prophet himself wrote the words.

Some have attempted to reconcile these latter versions with the Qur'ânic testimony about the Prophet's illiteracy by assuming that the Prophet learnt a little bit of reading and writing later in his life and subsequent to the revelation of the Qur'ânic passages in question. This view is probably based on a tradition narrated by 'Awn ibn 'Abd Allah which says that "the Prophet did not die before he read and wrote."[3] This particular tradition is unanimously regarded as very "weak" and is rejected on the ground of its conflict with the Qur'ânic testimony.[4] It is also pointed out that had the Prophet subsequently learnt to read and write, that noticeable fact and the person or persons who helped him in acquiring the skill, would surely have been noted and reported by many of his companions. Hence the assumption cannot be sustained.[5]

1. *Fatḥ al-Bârî*, V., p. 217.
2. See for instance 'Izzat Darwâzah, *Sîrat al-Rasûl etc.* I, Beirut, 1400 H., p. 82.
3. Al Haythamî, *Majma' al-Zawâ'id etc.*, VII, Beirut, 1986, p. 274.
4. *Ibid.*
5. 'Abul-'A'lâ Maudûdî, *Sîrat -i-Sarwari-'Âlam*, (ed. Na'îm Ṣiddîqî and others), I., Lahore, 1978, p. 124 n.

CHAPTER VIII

ADOLESCENCE AND YOUTH: THE ORIENTALISTS' VIEWS

A number of observations and assumptions have been made by the orientalists regarding the Prophet's life prior to his receipt of the revelation. Quite a few of these assumptions bear heavily on his life as Prophet and on his mission as a whole. Nevertheless, since they relate in the first instance to his pre-prophetic life, it would be worthwhile to discuss them before noting the coming of revelation to him and the beginning of his prophetic activities.

In the main the orientalists' remarks and assumptions relate to the following topics:

(a) The Prophet's life as a shepherd;

(b) The nature of *Fijâr* wars and *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* and the Prophet's role in them;

(c) His trading activities;

(d) His marriage with Khadîjah;

(e) The state of his religious beliefs; and

(f) His alleged ambition and preparation for the role he subsequently played.

The last item embraces the question of his illiteracy and that of the influence of the contemporary situation upon him, particularly his alleged drawing on Judaism and Christianity and his allegedly having imbibed the erroneous scientific notions of the time and their consequent reproduction in the Qur'ân. This latter allegation is advanced lately by Watt. He also relates his economic interpretation of the rise of the Prophet and of Islam to the *Fijâr* wars and the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl*. The issues and points raised in all these are momentous and they require careful consideration. The present chapter deals with items (a), (c), (d) and (e). The rest are discussed in four successive chapters taking, in order, (i) Watt's theories about *Ḥarb al-Fijâr* and *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl*, (ii) the allegation of ambition and preparation, (iii) the alleged drawing on Judaism and Christianity and (iv) the alleged contemporary errors in the Qur'ân.

I. REGARDING HIS LIFE AS A SHEPHERD

With regard to the Prophet's tending of sheep it has been suggested that

he earned money by that profession in order to support his needy uncle 'Abu Ṭâlib. Thus william Muir writes: "the hire received for this duty would contribute towards the support of his needly uncle Abu Ṭâlib."[1] Margoliouth goes a step further and says: "Abu Talib probably employed him in looking after the sheep and camels which he kept at 'Uranah, near Mt. Arafat".[2] The obvious innuendo of these statements is that the boy Muḥammad (ﷺ) received a rather step-fatherly treatment at 'Abû Ṭâlib's hand and that he was so needy at the time that he had to hire out his nephew as a shepherd for others for a pittance.

It may be noted that though there was no stigma or humiliation attached to the profession of tending sheep nor to earning money thereby, the above mentioned suggestions are not supported by any direct evidence. If the boy Muḥammad (ﷺ) was engaged in the tending of sheep, so were his cousins, the sons of 'Abû Ṭâlib. Also the assumption that the latter was very poor and needy when the Prophet was a boy is not correct. 'Abû Ṭâlib's financial position did of course deteriorate late in his life, but he was not that worse off earlier, till at least his trade journey to Syria when the Prophet was about twelve years old. Nor is the point about the latter's having earned money by tending sheep for others is well established by the sources. The solitary tradition mentioning his having tended sheep at or for *qarârîṭ* as noted earlier,[3] admits of different interpretations and is not in any case a clear evidence on the point. These facts need to be kept in mind while making any speculation about the Prophet's life as a shepherd boy.

Both Muir and Margoliouth also reproduce the tradition noted by Al-Ṭabarî[4] which says that twice while tending sheep the Prophet thought of enjoying night-life of the town but on each occasion he was overtaken by sleep before he could even reach the supposed place of enjoyment.[5] Muir accepts the reported statement as correct and observes: "making every allowance for the fond reverence which paved an easy way for the currency of such stories, it is quite in keeping with the character of Mahomet that he should have shrunk from the coarse and licentious practices of his youthful

1. W. Muir, *The Life of Mahomet*, 3rd edition, 1893, p. 17 (1st edition, Vol. II., p. 12).
2. D.S. Margoliouth, *Mohammed and the Rise of Islam*, 3rd edition, 1905, p. 51.
3. *Supra*, pp. 163-164.
4. Al-Ṭabarî, II, 279 (1 / 1126-1127).
5. Muir, *op.cit*, 3rd edn., p. 18; 1st edn., pp. 14-15; Margoliouth, *op.cit*, p. 52.

friends."[1] Margoliouth, however, casts doubt on the Prophet's veracity and remarks: "if we are to believe him, sleep fell on him miraculously before he could so disgrace himself".[2]

Of late, toeing the lines of Muir and Margoliouth A . Guillaume has reproduced the report in full as a footnote to his translation of Ibn Isḥâq's work.[3] He introduces it by way of explainig a remark of Suhaylî's. The latter, it may be recalled,[4] while commenting upon the incident of the Prophet's not taking his shirt off when carrying stones in connection with some work at the Ka'ba, says that the incident probably occurred twice. Guillaume suggests that this assumption of "twice" on Suhaylî's part has been prompted by the term "twice" occurring in the above mentioned tradition. Guillaume's real reason for reproducing the tradition, however, appears to be what he further says in this connection. He says that though Ibn Isḥâq gives the story of the boy Muḥammad's (ﷺ) sense of modesty, Al-Ṭabarî "omits the story altogether and in its place" inserts the story about the intended nocturnal enjoyment.

For these reasons a little closer look at the report in question is necessary. In the first place, though Al-Ṭabarî states that he had the report from Ḥumayd who received it from Salama to whom, it is stated, Muḥammad ibn Isḥâq narrated it on the basis of others' narrations, it is strange that the report is not inserted in Ibn Isḥâq's *sîrah* as edited by Ibn Hishâm. It is hard to assume that the report was originally in Ibn Isḥâq's work but was subsequently omitted by Ibn Hishâm; for, he is particular in mentioning what he omits and what he adds of his own comments or notes. Guillaume himself does not appear to think that the report was originally inserted by Ibn Isḥâq in his work. Hence this very fact of Ibn Isḥâq's not having recorded the report and yet its being traced to him in a subsequent work raises serious doubts about its authenticity. Secondly, the wordings of the report recorded in Al-Ṭabarî and some other works subsequent to it do not agree with one another.[5] This discrepancy in the wordings leaves no room for doubt that the

1. Muir, *op.cit.*

2. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*

3. A. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Isḥâq's Sîrat Rasûl Allah*, 5th impression, Karachi, 1958, p. 81 n.

4. *Supra*, p. 166.

5. Compare for instance the text in Al-Ṭabarî and that in Ibn Kathîr, *Al-Bidâyah etc.*, II, 287-288.

reporters themselves introduced their own words and expressions in the story and that therefore it is not a verbatim report of what the Prophet might have said, if he did at all, on the subject. Thirdly, the report as it is given by Al-Ṭabarî says that the Prophet was tending sheep in the "upper part" of Makka (بأعلى مكة) and that he asked his shepherd colleague to look after his sheep through the night,etc. Now, it was not usual for shepherds, if not quite away from their own homes and at distant oases, to keep their sheep in the field at night and themselves remain away from home. The internal evidence of the story thus indicates that something is wrong with it. Hence Ibn Kathîr, while noting the report, rightly points out that it is "very strange and unusual" and that something has been mixed up in the process of transmission of the report.[1]

Another insinuation against the Prophet has been made by Margoliouth. He says that the Prophet had a love for sport and merry-making and remarks: "and indeed even when Prophet he had a taste for the performance of singing girls."[2] As his authority for this statement Margoliouth cites two traditions in the *Musnad*.[3] Both the traditions, it may be noted, relate to occasions of marriage ceremonies and do not in any way concern the Prophet's personal participation in or enjoyment of any sport or singing performance. To ilustrate how the text has been misinterpreted we quote in full the tradition on which the insinuation about singing girls has been founded. It runs as follows:[4]

﴿ ... عن جابر قال قال رسول الله ﷺ لعائشة أهديتم الجارية إلى بيتها . قالت نعم قال فهلا بعثتم معهم من يغنيهم يقول أتيناكم أتيناكم فحيونا نحياكم فإن الأنصار قوم فيهم غزل . ﴾

Translation: "It is narrated by Jâbir. He said that the Messenger of Allah, may peace and blessings of Allah be on him, said to 'Â'ishah (r.a.): 'Have you started the bride on her way to her (husband's) house?' She said: 'Yes'. He (the Messenger of Allah) said: 'Have you not sent with them (the bridal party) someone who will sing to them saying: We have come to you, we have come to you; so welcome us; we welcome you. For the Helpers (*anṣâr*) are a people with a custom for such felicitating rhyme (*ghazal*)."

It is clear that the tradition refers to a particular custom among the Help-

1. *Ibid*, p. 288. See also Muḥammad al-Ghazâlî, *Fiqh al-Sîrah*, 7th edition, 1978, pp. 72-73 n.

2. Margoliouth, *op, cit*., p. 70.

3. *Musnad*, III, p. 391; IV, p. 67.

4. *Musnad*, III, p. 391.

ers relating to the sending of a bride to her husband's house. The specific wording of the rhyme is also given in the tradition. Also it was the custom that little girls and boys should vanguard the bridal party reciting the rhyme. The whole purpose of such performance was not simply an expression of joy on the happy occasion, but mainly to make the conclusion of marriage known to society and to discourage the performance of marriage secretly and unobtrusively.[1] By no stretch of the imagination this tradition, and the others to the same effect, can be construed to show a liking on the Prophe's part for the performance of singing girls, an expression that conveys a totally different impression.

II. SPECULATIONS ABOUT THE PROPHET'S TRADING ACTIVITIES

That the Prophet did engage himself in some trading activities is clear from the sources. It is also well known that he made two trade journeys to Syria, once in company with his uncle 'Abû Ṭâlib and again as leader of Khadijah's (r.a.) caravan when he was about twenty-five years old. If he had made any other trade journeys to distant lands that would surely have been noted by the chroniclers or reported by his many companions as an important event in his life. Basing upon the above mentioned facts, however, the orientalists have made a number of far-fetched and wide speculations.

Thus W. Muir, writing in connection with the Prophet's second journey to Syria, makes him visit a number of other places, though there is not the slightest indication in the sources to such excursions. Muir says that though the direct route from Makka to Bosra lay a great way east of the Mediterranean, it was possible that either in connection with that journey or on the former journey the Prophet might have seen the Mediterranean sea and even visited Gaza, "the favourite entrepot of the Meccan merchants." The reason adduced by him is: "His reference in the Coran to ships gliding majestically on the waters, *like mountains*, point to a larger class of vessels than he was likely to see on the Red Sea." It is further stated that the vivid pictures of sea-storms and waves drawn in the Qur'ân might have been seen by the Prophet from the Arabian shore, but the "mountain ships" he saw "more likely from the Syrian."[2]

This statement of the Prophet's having visited the shores of the Medi-

1. See for interpretation of this tradition and some others to the same effect in 'Aḥmad 'Abd al-Raḥmân al-Bannâ al-Sâ'atî, *Al-Fatḥ al-Rabbânî*, Part XVI, pp. 212-213.

2. Muir, *op.cit.*, 3rd edn., p. 21 n 1 (1st edn., II, p. 20 n.)

terranean and the port of Gaza is a pure conjecture based on an equally untenable assumption that he himself composed the Qur'ân incorporating in it his own knowledge and experiences. The incorrectness of this latter hypothesis will be discussed elsewhere in this work.[1] Here only it may be pointed out that the "vivid pictures" of sea-storms and "mountain ships" found in the Qur'ân could not have been drawn even by a casual view of them from the shores alone. Also, had the Prophet visited the shores of the Mediterranean, not to speak of Gaza, either on his first or on his second journey to Syria, that fact would have found mention in the chronicles or in the traditions in some form or other. For, after all, he did not make any trade journey to such distant lands all alone and without being accompanied by a number of others who became subsequently either his friends or enemies.

Obviously taking his cue from Muir, Margoliouth extends the scope of the Prophet's imaginary travels in all directions, east and west, north and south, and makes him visit all the countries in and bordering the Arabian peninsula—Syria, Persia, Ḥîra, Baḥrayn, Yaman, Egypt and Abyssinia. "The Koran shows him," writes Margoliouth, "acquainted with travelling by sea as well as by land; he there describes the motions of the ships and the results of storms with a realism which savours of experience."[2] Thus avoiding the unreasonableness in Muir's assumption, namely, that a casual glance from the shores could not have imparted such realism in the Qur'ânic description, Margoliouth makes the Prophet not simply stand on the shores of the Arabian Sea and the Mediterranean but also travel by land as well as by sea. Margoliouth further says that the Prophet knew a sweet sea as well as a salt sea, "the two, he supposed, were kept from combining by a dam"; that there is reason to suppose that he saw the Dead Sea, the rock-tombs of Al-Hijr, the villages in Baḥrayn and a "breed of tailless sheep in Yemen", all of which find mention by him in some form or other.[3]

It is not necessary to point out how closely and faithfully Margoliouth follows Muir in these conjectures. The same assumption underlies them, namely, that the Prophet himself composed the text of the Qur'ân; but Margoliouth adds a new dimension to it. He advances another hypothesis, that the Prophet took advantage of all these travels and journeys to acquire

1. *Infra*, chaps. XI & XIII.
2. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, p. 57.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

all sorts of knowledge and thus made a rather long-drawn preparation for the role he subsequently played. That hypothesis will be dealt with presently. In the meantime it may simply be asked: If everything stated in the Qur'ân is taken to be based on the Prophet's personal knowledge and experience, why not believe in the vivid descriptions of paradise and hell given therein, specially when there are reports categorically stating that he had a view of them in the course of a special journey made by him?

Of late Watt also has lent support to the Muir-Margoliouth conjectures. Thus describing the Prophet's early life in what he conceives to be the light of the Qur'ân Watt observes in his latest work on the subject: "In the passage describing a storm at sea (10:22...) some would hold that the vividness of the description implied personal experience of a storm; and in that case Muḥammad must have voyaged across the Red Sea to Ethiopia."[1] Why Ethiopia, of all places, and why only the Red Sea where, according to Muir, the "mountain ships" could not be found, are not indicated by Watt. He adds, however, that such experiences might have been familiar to many others as well at Makka. Again, a little further on, while referring to the Qur'ânic passage revealed at Madina and speaking about an attempt by some section of the people to mislead the Prophet on the occasion of the battle of 'Uḥud (4:113) Watt says that "it is conceivable that it might refer to attempts of the Meccans before the Hijra to 'lead him astray' by engulfing him in commerce."[2] Watt does not explain how it is "conceivable" to put such a construction on the passage, nor does he cite any fact or authority to support the conjecture that the Makkans did, before the *hijrah*, attempt to lead the Prophet astray by "engulfing" him in commerce.

More remarkable is that this latest observation of his runs somewhat counter to what he says in his ealier work about the Prophet's trading activities, suggesting that he was excluded from the inner circle of traders and from the most profitable operations. In fact Watt makes a number of suggestions, each in effect contradicting the other. This is how he does so. He first says that although there is no record of the Prophet's having travelled to Syria again "does not mean that he did not do so, though it is always possible that he entrusted the oversight of his business to others."[3] Having thus sug-

1. W.M. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca: History in the Qur'ân*, Edinburgh University Press, 1988, p. 48.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
3. Watt, *M. at M.*, p. 38.

gested that the Prophet might have again travelled to Syria or might have entrusted the job to his agent, that is, he was in any case engaged, like the others, in Makka's international trade, Watt seems to have remembered his laboriously built theory of an acute trade rivalry between Banû Hâshim and their allies on the one hand and Banû 'Abd Shams, Banû 'Abd al-Dâr and their allies on the other, and his further theory that the latter excluded the former from the field of Makka's external trade. Therefore he quickly adds a reservation or rather a virtual contradiction to the above mentioned statement saying immediately: "The possibility should also be kept in mind, however, that he was excluded from the inner circle of traders and from the most profitable operations."[1] But again, having made this last observation, he seems to realize that he was too close on to the time when the Prophet is found to have given his daughter in marriage to a member of the influential Banû 'Abd Shams and two other daughters to the sons of another influential member of his own clan, Abû Lahab. Hence Watt hurries to carry out another about-turn saying: "It is unlikely, however, that he was altogether excluded, since he was able to marry his daughter Zaynab to a member of the clan of 'Abd Shams... The fact that two other daughters were betrothed to two sons of Abû Lahab,... suggests that, Muḥammad, too, was regarded as one of the most promising youths of the clan."[2]

Thus in three consecutive sentences at one place Watt would have us believe that (a) the Prophet probably carried on trade with Syria either by travelling there personally again or through his agent; (b) that he was possibly excluded from such profitable operations and from the inner circle of Makka's traders, and (c) that it was unlikely that he was so excluded because he was very much in close relationship with that "inner circle" and the mercantile élite of the city. Needless to say that Watt could have saved himself the trouble of making such contradictory conjectures had he not been caught in the web of his misconceived theory of an acute trade war between Banû Hâshim and the others on which he builds many other conjectures. The truth is that neither Banû Hâshim in general nor the Prophet in particular were ever excluded from the so-called "most profitable" operations, nor did the so-called Makkan inner circle ever attempt before the *hijrah* to divert the Prophet from his mission by "engulfing" him in commerce.

1. *Iibd.*, pp. 38-39.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

III. CONCERNING THE PROPHET'S MARRIAGE WITH KHADÎJAH (R.A.)

The orientalists' remarks regarding the Prophet's marriage with Khadîjah (r.a.) concentrate on three matters—(a) his motive in marrying her; (b) her age at the time of the marriage and (c) the manner in which the marriage was performed.

As regards the Prophet's motive, the main insinuation has been made by Margoliouth. He alleges that the Prophet delayed marrying till the twenty-fifth year of his age because he was a calculating and ambitious individual and waited for an opportunity for improving his material position through marriage. In this connection Margoliouth castigates not only the Prophet but also the Arabs in general for their alleged passion saying; "Mohammed, though not without his share of that passion of which the Talmud rightly says nine parts have been given to the Arabs, and only one to the rest of the world, waited to marry till he could better himself thereby."[1]

The above is a glaringly spiteful remark. It is an acknowledged fact that Khadîjah (r.a.) was a very rich lady and that the Prophet's material position was undoubtedly improved by this marriage. This fact is attested by the Qur'ân. It is also true that when Khadîjah's (r.a.) agent Nafîsah asked the Prophet about the reason for his not having married till then, he frankly stated his financial insufficiency for undertaking the responsibilities of married life. But these facts cannot be twisted to suggest that he entertained a plan to improve his financial position by marrying a wealthy lady, not to speak of Khadîjah (r.a.) only. That he did not dream of marrying her is evident from the fact that all the authorities are unanimous in saying that it was she herself, not the Prophet, who took the initiative in the matter and made the proposal for the marriage. Secondly, the statement of her agent, Nafîsah, shows that the Prophet was unmistakably surprised when she disclosed Khadîjah's (r.a.) name as the proposed bride. On hearing Nafîsah the Prophet remarked: "How could that be for me?" He ultimately signified his assent to Nafîsah to proceed with the matter only when she made it clear that she had been acting under instructions from Khadîjah (r.a.) herself.[2] These indisputable facts militate against any assumption of a prior design on the Prophet's part to improve his material position by marrying a wealthy lady like Khadîjah

1. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, p. 66. Cf. his remark at his p. 69 where he reflects adversely on the Prophet's potency.

2. *Supra*, p. 174.

(r.a.).

Equally untenable is the logic employed to create doubt about Khadîjah's (r.a.) age at the time of her marriage with the Prophet. "She was some years older than Mohammed", writes Margoliouth, "but assuredly not forty, as Mohammed's biographers assert; though the legend makes some of the bedouin ladies keep their good looks till eighty or even hundred, and the Kurashite women were regarded as an exception to the law which renders child-bearing impossible after sixty."[1] And almost echoing him Watt asserts: "The age of Khadîjah has perhaps been exaggerated. The names of seven children she bore to Muḥammad are mentioned in the sources... Even if, as one of Ibn Sa'd's authorities says, they came at regular yearly intervals, that would make her forty-eight before the last was born. This is by no means impossible, but one would have thought it sufficiently unusual to merit comment; it is even the sort of thing that might well have been treated as miraculous. Yet no single word or comment occurs in the pages of Ibn Hishâm, Ibn Sa'd or at-Ṭabarî."[2]

Now, some later works on *sîrah* do of course mention a few different sayings about Khadîjah's (r.a.) age at her marriage with the Prophet;[3] but the earlier authorities like Ibn Sa'd and Al-Ṭabarî accept the report saying that she was forty at the time. The logic employed by Margoliouth and Watt to create doubt on the point, that of the age-limit for child-bearing, and the supposition that her age "has perhaps been exaggerated" are, however, both gratuitous. Margoliouth speaks of sixty as the age when child-bearing should be considered unusual; but that age-limit is clearly not applicable in the present instance. Watt, on the other hand, seems to rectify Margoliouth in this respect; but in doing so he (Watt) too is somewhat beside the mark. For, calculating, as he does, on the basis of yearly births, the birth of the seventh child should be placed in the forty-seventh and not in the forty-eighth year of her age. But then, according to some view, the number of her children was six, the names of Ṭayyib and Ṭâhir having both been used for one and the same child.[4] The age-limit would thus be reduced by another year to forty-

1. Margoliouth, *op.cit*, p. 67.

2. Watt, *M. at M.*, p. 38.

3. See for instance Ibn Kathîr (701-747 H.), *Al-Sîrat al-Nabawiyyah*, (ed. Muṣtafâ 'Abd al-Wâḥid), I., Beirut, n.d., p. 264; *Al-Ḥalabi*, I, p. 229.

4. See Ibn Hishâm, I., 190, n.3 and Suhaylî, I., 214.

six. Even allowing some gaps and accepting Watt's calculation that her last child was born in her forty-eighth year, it would not be quite unusual or unnatural for any lady of sound health, neither in ancient nor in modern times to bear a child at such age.[1]

Watt himself acknowledges that this is "by no means improbable."; yet he argues that such an event is sufficiently unusual to merit comment" and that it "was the sort of thing that might well have been treated as miraculous", but Ibn Hishâm, Ibn Sa‘d and Al-Ṭabarî record it without a single word of comment. The innuendo is that these early Muslim authorities were eager to grasp at every unusual event and cite it as a miracle for their Prophet. If they had really been so inclined to twist every unusual occurrence as a miracle they would surely have made a point out of the present case. Indeed, neither these historians nor their authorities would have exaggerated her age if they had no axe to grind thereby. Hence the very fact that they do not express any surprise on this point means, on the one hand, that they did not simply consider child-birth at about the forty-eighth year of the mother's age anything unusual and, on the other hand, that they did not exaggerate the age; for they had no purpose in doing so. Obviously it is not fair and logical first to assume that those authorities exaggerated Khadîjah's (r.a.) age and then to use their silence about the supposed unusual birth of her child as an argument in support of the allegation of exaggeration.

Lastly, about the manner in which the marriage took place. W. Muir, following Weil and Sprenger,[2] adopts a report which is noted by Al-Wâqidî along with a number of other reports on the subject and which says that Khadîjah, (r.a.) fearing that her father Khuwaylid would not consent to the proposed marriage, had recourse to a contrivance. She prepared a grand feast for her father and when he was "well drunk and merry" made him unite her in marriage to the Prophet "in the presence of his uncle Hamza", and that when the old man came to his senses he was furious and wanted to revoke the act but was ultimately persuaded to accept the *fait accompli*.[3]

It must be noted that Al-Wâqidî, while giving an account of the marriage

1. The present writer himself saw a child born to a colleague of his at Riyadh in 1984 (an Indian national) when his wife was nearly fifty. Also a British lady (of Greek origin) gave birth to a son some years ago in London when she was well over forty.

2. Cited by Muir, *op. cit*, 1st edition, II., p. 24 n.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24 (third edition, p. 23).

on the basis of other reports, refers to this one as well by way of pointing out that it was a mistaken and unreliable account.[1] Al-Ṭabarî also does the same, namely, he mentions it and then adds his own comment saying that it is untrue and unreliable.[2] Both these authorities also point out that Khadîjah's (r.a.) father Khuwaylid died before the *Fijâr* war and that her uncle 'Amr ibn Asad acted as guardian for her marriage. And althought Ibn Isḥâq at first says that Khuwaylid gave her in marriage, he (Ibn Isḥâq) rectifies his mistake at a later stage in his work and mentions that 'Amr gave her in marriage.[3]

Clearly Muir has misled his readers by suppressing the fact that Al-Waqidî, whom he quotes as the authority for the report, unequivocally characterizes it as untrue and unreliable. Muir of course argues that since the report got currency in spite of what he says the proneness of the Muslim scholars to suppress every report that is discreditable to their Prophet, it must be accepted "as a fact".[4] In this statement too Muir is mistaken. The Muslim scholars did *not* suppress any report found to be discreditable to the Prophet, not at least this one. On the contrary they, in their eagerness to preserve every information that was available about him, took care to note whatever they came across, sometimes adding their own comments and observations regarding a particular report. That is exactly what Al-Wâqidî and Al-Ṭabarî have done in the present instance.

If Muir had been less inclined to lend credence to whatever appears discreditable to the Prophet and if he had applied his critical mind he could have seen that the report contains in itself elements of its spuriousness. It is said that Khadîjah (r.a.) had her father drunk, then slaughtered a cow, prepared a marriage feast, invited Muḥammad's (ﷺ) uncles and other relatives and got the marriage performed, etc. Now, such an elaborate preparation would require a whole night or a whole day, and it is manifestly unthinkable that her father Khuwaylid should have remained under the influence of the drink for so long a time. It is also unlikely that her brothers and other rel-

1. Ibn Sa'd, I, 133. Al-Wâqidi writes:

(فهذا كله عندنا غلط ووهل، والثبت عندنا المحفوظ عن أهل العلم أن أباها خويلد بن أسد مات قبل الفجار وأن عمها عمرو بن أسد زوجها رسول الله ﷺ)

2. *Al-Ṭabarî*, *Târikh*, II, 282 (I / 1129).
3. See Suhaylî, I, 214.
4. Muir, *op. cit.*, 1st edition, II, 24-25.

atives would have remained completely silent and conniving at her work. Indeed, the story is so absurd that it cannot be conceived of unless we assume at the same time that there was an elaborate conspiracy hatched by Khadîjah (r.a.) and her relatives against her father—a situation which is not at all borne out by the sources. Moreover, it is equally unthinkable that the Prophet's uncles and relatives, who by all accounts were present at the ceremony, would have so presented themselves at Khuwaylid's house without any invitation having been made by him and on a mere surreptitious summonning by his daughter. Thus, even if Al-Wâqidî had not pointed out the unreliability of the story, a little critical look at it would have been sufficient to expose its spuriousness.

It may further be pointed out that the report emanates from 'Abû Midlaz (Lâhiq ibn Ḥumayyid) who was a *tâbi'î* and who died in 106 or 109 H.[1] He says Khadîjah (r.a.) stated to him etc. Now, 'Abû Midlaz was born long after her death. He could thus by no means have got the narration from her. Hence the story is clearly a later fabrication and cannot be relied upon, as Al-Wâqidî rightly points out.

IV: CONCERNING THE STATE OF HIS RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

More serious are, however, the remarks made by the orientalists concerning the Prophet's religious attitude and practices prior to his receipt of the revelation. It has been alleged that he was more or less a polytheist like the rest of his people and worshipped or revered some of the idols. This allegation is quite contrary to the reports mentioned earlier about his pre-prophetic religious state.[2] This allegation has been made mainly by Margoliouth though he took over some points from his predecessors as the others subsequent to him have taken over from him.

Margoliouth's arguments are as follows:

(a) "The names of some of the children show that their parents, when they named them were idolators."[3]

(b) "He [the Prophet] with Khadijah performed some domestic rite in honour of one of the goddesses each night before retiring."[4]

(c) "He confessed to having at one time sacrificed a grey sheep to Al-

1. *Taqrîb al-Tahdhîb*, II, 340.
2. *Supra*, pp. 164-166.
3. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, pp. 69-70.
4. *Ibid.*, 70, citing *Musnad*, IV, p. 222.

'Uzzâ".[1]

(d) It was the monotheist Zayd ibn 'Amr who inspired Muḥammad (ﷺ) to dislike meat offered to idols.[2]

(e) Though the Prophet railed against idolatry "he had not that physical repugnance to it which men had often had: otherwise the kissing of the Black Stone would not have been a ceremony for which he yearned when deprived of it, and which he permanently retained."[3]

As regards the first argument Margoliouth does not cite any authority nor does he elucidate it in his work under reference. The point has been reiterated, however, by a subsequent writer who cites an authority in support of the statements. This question would therefore be taken up when we come to consider that writer's views on the matter.[4]

As regards the argument at (b) Margoliouth cites the authority of a tradition in the *Musnad*.[5] To see how this particular tradition has been misunderstood or misused it is necessary to quote its text which is as follows:

(حدثنا... ابن عروة عن أبيه قال حدثني جار لخديجة بنت خويلد أنه سمع النبي ﷺ وهو يقول لخديجة والله لا أعبد اللات والعزى والله لا أعبد أبدا قال فتقول خديجة خل اللات خل العزى قال كانت صنمهم التي كانوا يعبدون ثم يضطجعون)

Translation: "... Ibn 'Urwah, narrating from his father, stated: 'A neighbour of Khadîjah bint Khuwaylid related to me that he (the neighbour) heard the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be on him, saying to Khadîjah: 'O Khadijah, by Allah, I do not worship *Lât* and *'Uzzâ*, by Allah, I never do. He (the neighbour) says, at this Khadîjah said: 'Leave that *Lât,* leave that *'Uzzâ.*' He (the neighbour) said: 'Those were the idols they [the people] used to worship before retiring at night."

Now, it is obvious that Margoliouth has based his assumption on the last sentence of the tradition. In doing so, however, he has either failed to understand it properly or he has distorted it. It is clear that the expression: "those were the idols they used to worship before retiring at night" which is a statement of Khadîjah's neighbour, refers to the practice of the Quraysh people in general, and not at all to that of the Prophet and Khadîjah (r.a.). This is obvious from the context as well as from the grammatical rules governing the

1 Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, 70, citing Wellhausen, *Reste*, 34.
2. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, 70, citing *Musnad*, I, p. 189.
3. Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, 79.
4. *Infra*, pp. 204-210.
5. *Musnad*, IV, p. 222.

text. As regards the context, it would be incongruous and self-contradictory on the part of the reporter to state, as he did, that he heard the Prophet telling his wife that he never worshipped the idols and then to state, at the same time, that the Prophet and his wife used to worship those idols! Indeed there would be no point in the reporter's making such a statement unless he wanted to contradict and discredit the Prophet which, by no stretch of the imagination, can be assumed to have been the reporter's intention in the present instance.

As regards the gramamtical rules, it is worth noting that there are three verbs in the last clause of the sentence, namely, *kânû* (كانوا), *ya'budûna* (يعبدون) and *yaḍṭaji'ûna* (يضطجعون), all in the plural, in contradistinction to the dual form. Had these verbs been intended at all to refer to the Prophet and his wife, they would invariably have been framed in the dual form, i.e., *kânâ* (كانا), *ya'budâni* (يعبدان) and *yaḍṭaji'âni* (يضطجعان), as demanded by the Arabic grammatical rules.[1] The obvious meaning of the expression is that, after having reported what he heard the Prophet telling his wife the narrator adds a description of the idols saying that those were the idols "they", i.e. the Quraysh people, used to worship before going to bed at night. It is also noteworthy that the very description of the idols as *their* idols precludes any other conclusion. For the two idols mentioned here were neither introduced and inaugurated by the Prophet and his wife, nor were they (the two idols) exclusive to the Prophet's or Khadîjah's (r.a.) family. Hence the narrator could in no way have spoken of the idols in question as *their*, that is the Prophet's and Khadijah's (r.a.) idols. Both grammatically and linguistically the reference is unmistakably to the Quraysh people in general. Hence the very authority which Margoliouth adduces in support of his allegation only proves to the contrary showing that the Prophet forcefully stated, and that also to his wife, from whom he had no reason to hide anything about his habits, saying that he did never worship the idols.

In support of his statement at (c), namely, that the Prophet allegedly once confessed to having sacrificed a grey sheep to Al-'Uzzâ, Margoliouth cites the authority of J.Wellhausen's *Reste*, 34.[2] This latter scholar in fact bases his assertion on a report which occurs in the work of Yâqût and also in that

1. This has been pointed out by many a scholar. See for instance Akram Khân, *op. cit.*, p. 305.

2. i.e.J. Wellhausen, *Reste Arabischen Heidentums*, 2nd edn, Berlin, 1897.

of 'Abû al-Mundhir (ibn al-Kalbî). In his book *Mu'jam al-Buldân* Yâqût, while giving an account of Al-'Uzzâ, writes: "'Abû al-Mundhir has said: 'We heard [وقد بلغنا] that the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be on him, mentioned her [Al-'Uzzâ] once and said: I offered a grey sheep to Al-'Uzzâ when I was following the religion of my people."[1] It is clear that Yâqût had the report from 'Abû al-Mundhir. In fact not only this report but the whole of Yâqût's description of Al-'Uzzâ is a verbatim reproduction or rather a blatant plagiarism of what 'Abû al-Mundhir writes about that idol in his *The Book of Idols*.[2]

Now, all the recognized authorities on *ḥadîth* literature treat this 'Abû al-Mundhir as a notorious falsifier and fabricator of traditions and declare unanimously that he should not at all be trusted and relied upon in matters concerning the Prophet's character and questions of legal and theological rules. Thus Ibn Ḥibbân, one of the early authorities on *ḥadîth*, characterizes 'Abû al-Mundhir as an extreme *Shî'î*, very prolix in telling strange stories and reports of which there is no foundation in fact. Ibn Ḥibbân further says that 'Abû al-Mundhir's mistakes and fabrications are so notorious that they do not require description.[3] Similarly Ibn Ḥajar castigates 'Abû al-Mundhir and quotes Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal as saying that he ('Abû al-Mundhir) was a cheap story-teller and gossip-monger. Ibn Ḥajar also quotes Al-Dâraquṭnî as saying that 'Abû al-Mundhir is always to be avioded.[4] Equally unfavourable is the opinion of Al-Dhahabî. He mentions that Ibn 'Asâkir characterized him as a *Râfiḍî*.[5] These are by way of examples only.[6] 'Abû al-Mundhir him-

1. Yâqût, *Mu'jam al-Buldân*, Beirut, n.d., IV, 116.

2. 'Abû al-Mundhir (Hishâm ibn Muḥamad ibn al-Sâ'ib al-Kalbî, d. 204 / 206 h.), *Kitâb al-Aṣnâm*, ed. Aḥmed Zakî Pascha, Cairo, 1914. Compare specially Yâqût's text with that of 'Abû al-Mundhir's pp. 18-19. His description of Al-'Uzzâ occupies his pp. 17-27.

3. Ibn Ḥibbân (Muḥammad ibn Ḥibbân ibn Aḥmad 'Abû Ḥâtim al-Tamîmî al-Bustî, d. 354 H.), *Kitâb al-Majrûḥîn Min al-Muḥaddithîn wa al-Ḍu'afâ' wa al-Matrûkîn*, Vol. I-III (ed. Muḥammad Ibrâhîm Zayd), Aleppo, 1396, III, 91.

4. Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalânî, *Lisân al-Mizân*, VI, Beirut, third impression, 1406 / 1986, p. 196 (no. 700).

5. Al-Dhahabî, *Mîzân al-I'tidâl*, (ed. 'Alî Muḥammad al-Bukhârî) VI, Dâr al-Ma'rifah, Beirut, pp. 304-305. See also *Al-Mughnî Fî al-Ḍu'afâ' al-Kabîr* (ed. Nûr al-Dîn 'Asîr), II, n.d., p. 711, no. 6756.

6. See also Al-'Aqîl ('Abû Ja'far Muḥammad ibn 'Amr ibn Ḥammâd), *Kitâb al-Ḍu'afâ' al-Kabîr*, (ed. 'Abd al-Mu'ṭî 'Amîn Qal'ajî) First impression, Beirut, n.d., p. 339, No. 1945; Aḥmad Zakî Pascha's introduction to the *Kitâb al-Aṣnâm*, *op.cit.*, p. 17; *Tahdhîb al-Tahdhîb*, XII, p. 269.

self confesses to his having on many occasions fabricated reports and provided false information.[1] Even by his own wording of the report under consideration it is a mere hearsay (وقد بلغنا). Thus the report which the orientalists persistently cite had long before the appearance of their writings been rejected as a fabricated and unreliable one. It stands condemned as a hearsay by the admission of Ibn al-Kalbî himself.

As regards his argument at (d), namely, that it was the monotheist Zayd ibn 'Amr who is reported to have inspired the Prophet to dislike meat offered to idols, Margoliouth of course cites a tradition recorded in the *Musnad*.[2] It says that Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl[3] once passed by the Prophet and Zayd ibn Ḥârithah. At that time Zayd ibn 'Amr was asked to partake of a meal prepared for the former two but he declined to do so saying that he did not eat anything slaughtered on an altar (*nuṣub*). The narrator adds that thereafter the Prophet was not seen eating anything slaughtered on an altar.

This tradition about a meeting between the Prophet and Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl and the incident of the meal has come down to us through different chains of narrators in various versions with considerable additions and alterations.[4] This fact is in itself a clear proof that things have been mixed up in the course of transmission of the report. So far as the report in the *Musnad* is concerned a few points need to be noted specially. In the first place, among its narrators is Mas'ûdî about whom it is generally held that he used to mix up matters and that therefore any report coming through him could not be cited as evidence.[5] Also two other narrators, Nufayl ibn Hishâm and his father Hishâm (ibn Sa'îd) are not quite trustworthy.[6] In another version

1. *Kitâb al-Aṣnâm, op.cit*, p. 21.
2. *Musnad*, I, 189-190. (Margoliouth, *op.cit.*, 70).
3. He was a *ḥanîf* and a paternal cousin of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb's, both Al-Khaṭṭâb and 'Amr being brothers. Their father Nufayl ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzâ was the sixth in descent from Ka'b ibn Lu'ayy.
4. See for instance, besides the *Musnad*, *Bukhârî*, nos. 3826 and 5499; Al-Ṭabarânî, *Al-Mu'jam al-Kabîr*, Vol. I., second impression, n.d., p. 151 and Vol. V, pp. 86-87; Al-Bayhaqî, *Dalâ'il al-Nubuwwah etc.*, Vol. II, Beirut, 1985, pp. 120-128, 144; Al-Dhahabî, *Siyar 'A'lâm al-Nubalâ'*, Vol. I., Beirut, 1986, pp. 220-222; Al-Haythamî, *Majma' al-Zawâ'id etc.*, Vol. IX, Beirut, 1986, pp. 420-421. It has been recorded also by Nasâ'î in his section on *manâqib*. See also Al-Dhahabî, *Al-Sîrat al-Nabawiyyah* (ed. 'Umar 'Abd al-Salâm Tadmurî), first impression, Beirut, 1987, pp. 85-92, where almost all the different versions have been reproduced.
5. Al-Ṭabarânî, *Al-Mu'jam al-Kabîr*, I, *op.cit.*, p. 151, f.n.

Muḥammad ibn 'Amr ibn 'Alqam is one of the narrators. He, too, is considered untrustworthy.[1] Hence this particular version in the *Musnad* is considered 'weak'.[2] In fact the entire portion of the report from "Zayd met them" (فمر بهما زيد) to the end of his reported remarks is a mixing up of what actually happened.[3] This is evident also from the fact that Al-Bayḥaqî gives the report through the same Mas'ûdî in which this portion does not occur.[4]

Secondly, even taking the *Musnad's* text as it is, it can in no way be shown that the Prophet had slaughtered the animal and prepared the meal. In fact none of the different versions gives such an impression. On the contrary the wordings as well as the tenor of the various versions show clearly that the meal was prepared by the others and presented by them to the Prophet and his companion. And as regards the question of eating of the meal, the correct and reliable report given by Bukhârî says that once Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl happened to meet the Prophet before his call to Prophethood, at Baldah (near Makka), when such a meal was presented to the Prophet. He refused to partake of it; so did Zayd ibn 'Amr, adding: "I do not eat what you people slaughter on the altars, etc."[5] Obviously this expresion of Zayd's, which was a sequel to the Prophet's earlier refusal to partake of the meal and which Zayd made when he was in turn offered the meal, has been mixed up by some of the narrators and made to appear as though he was the person who first declined to eat of the meal.[6] That things have been mixed up is cleary illustrated also by the fact that in one version of this report the same group of narrators add to their narration that the Prophet, while running between Ṣafâ and Marwah strictly asked Zayd ibn Ḥârithah, his adopted son who was with him, not to go near nor touch the two idols, 'Îsâf and Nâ'ilah, posted at those two places and which the other Makkans were wont to touch

6. *Ibid.* See also Al-Dhahabî, *Siyar 'A'lâm al-Nubalâ'*, I, p. 222.

1. Al-Ṭabarânî, *op.cit.*, V, p. 86 n.

2. *Ibid.*

3. Muḥibb Allah Shâh, quoted in Al-Ṭabarânî, *op.cit.*, I, p. 151 n. See also Nâṣir al-Dîn al-Albânî's comment in Muḥammad al-Ghazâlî's *Fiqh al-Sîrah*, 7th impression, 1986, pp. 86-87n.

4. Al-Bayhaqî, *Dalâ'il etc.*, II, first impression, Beirut, 1985 / 1405. pp. 123-124.

5. *Bukhârî*, no. 3826. The text runs as follows:

(حدثني... أن النبي ﷺ لقي زيد بن عمرو بن نفيل بأسفل بلدح قبل أن ينزل على النبي ﷺ الوحي فقدمت إلى النبي ﷺ سفرة فأبى أن يأكل منه، ثم قال زيد: إني لست آكُلُ مما تذبحون على أنصابكم...)

6. See for comments on this report *Fatḥ al-Bârî*, VIII, third impression, pp. 176-178 and IX, pp. 630-631.

while making the ritual runs there. Evidently the intention of the narrators was to emphasize that the Prophet steered clear of idolatry even before his call to Prophethood. Again, the same group of narrators report this latter incident as a separate narration without alluding to the incident of the meal.[1]

Thus a comparison and collation of the various versions of the report shows that neither did the Prophet slaughter the animal and prepare the meal, nor did he partake of it; although the mere partaking of such food, like marrying within the prohibited degrees, would not be regarded improper before the orders of prohibition were revealed respecting these two matters. On the other hand one version of the report in *Bukhârî*, which is unquestionably the more reliable, categorically states that the Prophet was the first person to decline the meal. Also, two other versions of the report from the same group of narrators emphasize, in addition, that the Prophet strictly avoided the idols placed at Ṣafâ and Marwah while making runs between those places. It is also obvious from the different versions that the reported meeting between Zayd ibn 'Amr and the Prophet took place not long before the latter's call to Prophethood when his religious attitude, particularly his attitude towards idolatry, must have taken definite shape, specially as we know that he emphatically stated to his wife at an obviously early stage of their conjugal life that he had never worshipped Al-Lât and Al-'Uzzâ.[2] Clearly at that juncture of time to which the report under discussion relates the Prophet was in no need to be "inspired" for the frist time by Zayd ibn 'Amr and his like to detest the idols and to avoid meats dedicated to them.

Lastly, with regard to Margoliouth's remark noted at (e) above, namely, that the Prophet had not much of physical repugnance to idolatry because he retained in Islam the practice of kissing the Black Stone. In making this remark Margoliouth has fallen into three errors, namely, (a) an error about the original nature of the Black Stone; (b) an error about what he calls the Prophet's yearning for kissing it and (c) an error about the purpose and object of the practice of kissing / touching it.

There are a number of traditions about the origin of the Black Stone.[3]

1. Cf. Al-Dhahabî, *Siyar 'A'lâm al-Nubalâ'*, I, pp. 220-221 and his *Al-Sîrat al-Nabawiyyah*, *op.cit*, pp. 81, 87-88; and Al-Ṭabarânî, *op.cit.*, V, pp. 86-87 (Nos. 4663 and 4665).

2. *Supra*, 196.

3. See for instance Musnad, I, 307, 329, 373; II, 213, 214; III, 277; *Tirmidhî*, nos. 877, 878; *Nasâ'î*, no. 2935. See also Muḥammad Tayyib al-Najjâr, *Al-Qawl al-Mubîn Fî Sîrat* =

According to Ibn al-'Athîr, Prophet Ibrâhim, while erecting the Ka'ba, obtained the stone from the nearby mountain of 'Abu Qubays and placed it in one corner of the Ka'ba so that it might become the starting and finishing point of circumambulating (*ṭawâf*) the House.[1] Although this statement of Ibn al-'Athîr's does not really explain the origin of the stone it nonetheless informs us how and why Prophet Ibrâhîm got it and used it. Throughout the succeeding ages this nature and purpose of the Black Stone has never been lost sight of. Following the Abrahamic tradition the pre-Islamic inhabitants of Makka and other Arabs used to start their circumambulation of the House from the point of the Black Stone and kiss it. But there is nothing in the sources to suggest that they worshipped it along with their goddesses or considered it as having any divine attribute or possessing any power of doing good or evil. Nor is there any hint that the act of kissing constituted a form of worship or a rite connected with the worship of idols. The kissing of the Black Stone was for the Arabs a sort of national institution signifying their identity with the Abrahamic tradition, never an act of idolatrous worship. Hence the suggestion that the retention of the practice is a remnant of idolatry is simply a misinterpretation of its origin and nature.

Secondly, Margoliouth's reference to the Prophet's alleged "yearning" for kissing the Black Stone is indeed a twisting of the facts. After the *hijrah* the Prophet did indeed yearn for making *'umrah* and *ḥajj*; but that is not the same thing as saying that he yearned merely for kissing the Black Stone or viewed it as an object of devotion or adoration.

Thirdly, the same practice of starting and finishing *ṭawâf* of the Ka'ba from the point of the Black Stone as established by Ibrâhîm has been retained in Islam. Indeed the *ḥajj* and *'umrah* are a continuation of the Abrahamic tradition in Islam. This tradition has nothing to do with idolatrous worship. It is an essential condition of correct performance of *ḥajj* and *'umrah* that the Ka'ba should be circumambulated; it is also an essential condition that the act of circumambulating should be started and finished at the point of the Black Stone. The touching and kissing of it is not an absolute requisite for *ḥajj* or *'umrah*. The Prophet himself sometimes kissed it, sometimes he did not. The act of kissing is done by way of showing one's love

= *Sayyid al-Mursalin*, Riyadh, 1981, pp. 21-26 where the various traditions have been quoted and discussed.

1. Ibn al-Athîr, *Al-Kâmil etc.*, I, p. 82.

and feeling for the Ka'ba, the centre which imparts a sense of direction for the entire Muslim community. The kissing of the Black Stone is only an expression of that sense of unity and adhesion to the great family and brotherhood which traces its origin to Ibrâhîm. Not a single Muslim could be found who thinks he worships the Black Stone, or regards it as possessing any power of bestowing a benefit or causing any harm. A Muslim worships neither the Black Stone nor the Ka'ba, but the Lord Alone of it and of the universe. The practice concerning the Black Stone is neither a fetish nor a remnant of idolatry.

Margoliouth has been followed in his arguments and conclusions by many a subsequent writer. Mention may be made, however, of Arthur Jeffery who, some quarter of a century after the appearance of Margoliouth's work, harnessed the orientalists' arguments on this question in an article captioned: "Was Muḥammad a Prophet from his infancy."[1] Jeffery starts with the observation that the whole question of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) immunity from idolatry in his early life is "an exceedingly foolish one", for it is "obvious to any instructed intelligence that every prophet before his call has followed the religion of his people, and that an infant prophet would be psychologically a monstrosity."[2] Thus castigating the Muslim attitude on the subject Jeffery forestalls the objections that might be raised to the traditions he cites by saying that the Muslim criticism of tradition concerned itself "solely with the examination of the *sanad*" and paid "very little attention to the *matn* or substance of tradition itself"; but attention to the latter yields "astonishingly fruitful results". Hence modern scholarship treats concentration on *isnâd* alone as worthless. He further says that as in the cases of Jesus, Buddha or even Alexander, there grew an idealizing tendency in the case of Muḥammad (ﷺ) too at a subsequent period giving rise to many such traditions. "It is thus precisely those traditions which are farthest from this idealizing tendency which are *a priori* the most likely to be genuine." For, these could not have been invented "after the idealizing process had started" and they would in all likelihood have been suppressed at that time "had they not been old and unquestionably authentic."[3] He further says that the Qur'ânic passage 93: 6-7 shows that Allah found Muḥammad (ﷺ) "in a false reli-

1. MW., XX, 1930, 226-234.
2. *Ibid.*, 226.
3. *Ibid.*, 227-228.

gion" and then guided him to the true one and that his whole attitude in the Qur'ân is that of a man who has forsaken the old religion of his people and is pressing on them the necessity of embracing a new and better religion. Jeffery then enumerates the following six reasons in support of his view.

(i) In his *Kitâb al-Bad' wa al-Târîkh* Al-Maqdisî gives a tradition on the authority of Qatâdah[1] which says that the first son whom Khadîjah (r.a.) "bore to the Prophet in the *Jâhiliyya* was named by him 'Abd Manâf, i,e, Servant of Manâf". *Manâf* was the name of an ancient and at one time important idol of Makka. And since Muḥammad (ﷺ) "after his assumption of the prophetic office" took care to change "the names of those of his followers which were reminiscent of the old paganism", it is obvious "that he would not have named his first-born 'Abd Manâf had he been at that time following the 'religion of Abraham' which he later professed".[2]

(ii) Prior to his prophethood he married three of his daughters to three idolatrous husbands (two to 'Abû Lahab's two sons and the eldest to 'Abû al-'Âṣ ibn Rabî'); and at that time "there was no consciousness on the part of anyone of any difference between the religion of Muḥammad and that of his Meccan contemporaries."[3]

(iii) Referring to the Prophet's arbitration in setting the Black Stone to its place at the time of the rebuilding of the Ka'ba Jeffery says that the fact that Muḥammad (ﷺ) took part in the rebuilding of the Ka'ba, the "House of that al-Lât, al-'Uzzâ and Manât" against whom he later "fulminated in the Qur'ân" shows that he was then "following peacefully the religion of his people."[4]

(iv) Jeffery cites the tradition in the *Musnad* (iv, 222), already referred to by Margoliouth, which speaks of a neighbour's overhearing the Prophet's statement to his wife refusing to worship Al-Lât and Al-'Uzzâ, and the neighbour's remark: "Those were the idols which they used to worship, and then go to bed". Jeffery adds his own reasons for supporting Margoliouth's interpretation of the tradition.[5] These reasons will be considered presently.

(v) Jeffery also cites the tradition in the *Musnad* (i, 189), also cited earlier

1. Jeffery writes "al-Qatada" which is a mistake. The name is is simply Qatâdah.
2. Jeffery, *op. cit.*, 228-229.
3. *Ibid.*, 229-230
4. *Ibid.*, 230-231.
5. *Ibid.*, 231-232.

by Margoliouth, purporting to show that Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl inspired the Prophet to abandon eating meat offered to idols.[1] Jeffery adds his own reasons which will be discussed presently.

(vi) Finally, Jeffery cites also the tradition, mentioned earlier by Margoliouth, which purports to show that the Prophet once offered a sheep to Al-'Uzzâ.[2]

It may be noted that the first in this series of arguments is only a documentation of Margoliouth's statement about the idolatrous nature of the names of some of the Prophet's children. The argument at (iii) about the Prophet's role in the resetting of the Black Stone is also somewhat an extension of Margoliouth's remarks about the Black Stone. And the points enumerated at (iv), (v) and (vi) are a reiteration of those mentioned by Margoliouth. Thus the only additional argument which may be said to be essentially Jeffery's own is that at (ii). But since he adduces his own reasons to strengthen all these points, all of them will be taken into consideration one by one. Before doing so, however, it would be worthwhile to examine a little closely Jeffery's preliminary remarks.

It may be noted at the outset that Jeffery somewhat inflates the proposition in order to make out his case. Muslims do never claim that Muḥammad (ﷺ)was a Prophet since his infancy, as Jeffery puts it, nor do they say that the Prophet followed since his boyhood the religion of Abraham. They only say that the Prophet was free from the stain of polytheism (*shirk*) even in his pre-prophetic life. This is not the same thing as saying that he was a Prophet "from" his infancy. Again, Jeffery's statement that it is "sufficiently obvious to any instructed intelligenece that every prophet before his call followed the religion of his people" is arguable. Nor is it at all "foolish" to think of a person, even though born and brought up amidst a certain religious environment, not practising the religious rites of that religious system. Such could be more easily the case where, as in the Makkan tribal society, the performance of religious rites was more in the nature of a communal exercise than of personal practice. Indeed in such a society non-participation in the communal religious functions by any individual would be rather a passive and unobtrusive attitude on his part than any noticeable disruption in the socio-religious system. Instances are not wanting of "non-practising Chris-

1. *Ibid.*, 232-233.
2. *Ibid.*, 233-234.

tians", for instance, in a Christian society. And if enquiries are made about what exactly such "non-practising" individuals believe in, many of them would be found to be in an intellectual vacuum or are atheists or marxists, though they generally pass off as normal members of their respective religious communities.

The matter goes beyond this, however. It is very obvious to any instructed intelligence that in the case of many a great man the signs of his subsequent greatness were discernible even in his very early life. And in so far as a great religious figure is concerned it is not at all unlikely that God sets his mind in the right direction from his boyhood. Enquiries made with persons newly embracing a monotheistic religion but previously belonging to another religious community reveal that in many cases they had developed an abhorrence of the polytheistic practices of their communities and avoided those practices since an early stage of their lives. The present writer interviewed a young Bengali Hindu convert to Islam studying at the Madina Islamic University. He stated that he began to dislike and avoid the worship of idols when he was 8 or 9 years of age, embraced Islam when he was about 12 years, left home, travelled to Pakistan with the help of a benfactor and after finishing his secondary education there joined the Madina Islamic University and graduated this year (1991).[1] Another young convert to Islam, formerly belonging to a Christian family at Leicester, England, who also studied for some time at the Madina Islamic University, related to the writer a similar story of his early abstinence from the Christian forms of worship. The idea of a boy belonging to a polytheistic society yet not practising polytheism is thus not at all "foolish" as Jeffery so confidently asserts.

His statement about the nature of Muslim criticistn of tradition also is untenable. The Muslim criticism was not concerned "solely" with the examination of *isnâd*; and even if that was so, that is no justification for a total dispensing with the examination of the authority on which a particular tradition purports to be based, as the orientalists seem to do. The accusation originally made by Muir and since then echoed by many including Jeffery that there was a proneness on the part of the Muslim authorities of old to suppress any report derogatory to their Prophet is absolutely unjustifiable. There never was any attempt to suppress anything. On the contrary, the attempt

1. The convert's name is Muḥammad Ṣafiullah (his previous name was Paresh Chandra Sil), son of Sri Sukumar Chandra Sil, of village Gabua, P.O. Mankaran, Badarpur, Dist. Patuakhali.

was to collect and preserve anything and everything that was available and in circulation. In fact there could be no attempt as such to suppress anything; for the writing down or circulation of traditions was no centralized affair and there could conceivably be no machinery to prevent an individual from writing down and transmitting a report or information he cared to collect. *Suppression* of anything under the circumstances was out of the question. It was because of this absence of any plan or feasibility to supervise and control the issuance of tradition, and because it was found that many spurious traditions were put in circulation by interested parties that the Muslim traditionists were led of necessity to formulate criteria to distinguish the genuine from the spurious traditions. The sheer historical fact is that there was no means of controlling the issuance of traditions while there was an abundance and unbridled growth of spurious traditions. The emphasis on *isnâd* is an outcome of this historical fact; and it is this fact which makes it absolutely necessary to strictly examine especially those very traditions that seem to run counter to the generally accepted facts about the Prophet's life or supply contradictory and inconsistent information on any particular point.

On the basically faulty assumption that there was a proneness on the part of the Muslims to suppress any report discreditable to their Prophet the orientalists generally go to the opposite extreme of exhibiting a proneness on their part to treat as genuine anything that appears to reflect discreditably on the Prophet. Jeffery's statement that the traditions which are farthest from the idealizing tendency are *a priori* the most likely to be genuine is symptomatic of this attitude. Even the existence of an idealizing tendency and the likelihood of the opposite type of traditions being genuine do not by themselves constitute sufficient grounds for doing away with any critical examination of the latter in respect of both *isnad* and other aspects. After all, Muslims do not readily accept the so-called idealizing traditions on the face of them without subjecting them to any test. That a little careful examination of the traditions cited by Jeffery in support of his view, in respect of both *isnâd* and *matn*, reveals their weaknesses and the hazard in treating them as conclusive on the points at issue would be seen presently.

Jeffery's first evidence is the report of Qatâdah noted by Al-Maqdisî[1] and relating to the name of the Prophet's first son born of Khadîjah (r.a.). It is

1. Muṭahhar ibn Ṭâhir al-Maqdisî (d. 355 H.), *Kitâb al-Bad' wa al-Târîkh*. ed. Huart, Paris, 1899, reprinted Beirut, 1916, p. 139.

defective in many ways. This Qatâdah (ibn Di'âmah, d. 117/118 H.) is generally considered a deceptive (*mudallis*) narrator who, it is further on record, quoted some thirty different persons as his informants but from whom he had never heard anything.[1] In the present instance it is not even mentioned from whom he received this particular information. More important still, there is a gap of about two hundred years between Al-Maqdisî (d.355 H.) and Sa'îd ibn 'Abî 'Urûbah (d.156/157 H.) who is said to have received the information from Qatâdah. Yet Al-Maqdisî does not mention how or through which sources he received the latter's report. This is all the more remarkable because he mentions the *book* of Ibn Isḥâq as the source while saying that the latter's statement on the subject differs from that of Sa'îd ibn 'Abî 'Urûbah.[2] Apart from this consideration of the *isnâd*, the text itself exhibits its weakness. Al-Maqdisî writes: "According to a report of Sa'îd ibn 'Abî 'Urûbah from Qatâdah she (Khadîjah, r.a.) gave birth to 'Abd Manâf for the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) in the *Jâhiliyyah* and she gave birth for him in Islâm to two sons and four daughters, Al-Qâsim and 'Abd Allah, and these two died in their childhood. And in the book of Ibn Isḥâq it is stated that his two sons died in the *Jâhiliyyah*."[3]

Now, the most important thing to note about this text is that while it specifically states that the two sons, Al-Qâsim and 'Abd Allah, who are said to have been born in Islam, died in their childhood, it does not say what happened to the alleged 'Abd Manâf who is said to have been born before them in the *Jâhiliyyah*. The emphasis laid on the death in childhood of the two other sons implies that the so-called 'Abd Manâf did not so die. But history does not know of any son for the Prophet attaining age or surviving him. Hence the statement in the report is clearly a mistake or confusion on the part of the person who made or transmitted it.

That there has been some confusion or mistake appears all the clearer from the fact that in the *Sîrat Mughalṭây*[4] it is unequivocally stated that Khadîjah (r.a.) gave birth to a son named 'Abd Manâf (or 'Abd Allah) for

1. *Tahdhîb al-Tahdhîb*, VIII, 351-356, especially p. 356.
2. See the next note.
3. Al-Maqdisî, *op. cit.*, 139. The Arabic text runs as follows:

(وفي رواية سعيد بن أبي عروبة عن قتادة أنها ولدت لرسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم عبد مناف في الجاهلية وولدت له في الإسلام غلامين وأربع بنات القاسم وعبدالله فماتا صغيرين وفي كتاب ابن إسحاق أن ابنيه هلكا في الجاهلية وأن بناته أدركن الإسلام وهاجرن والله أعلم)

4. Al-Ḥâfiz 'Alâ' al-Dîn Mughalṭây ibn Qulayz (d. 726), *Sîrat Mughalṭây*, Cairo print, 1326 H., p. 12.

her first husband 'Atîq ibn 'Â'id.[1] The report under consideration appears to have confused this 'Abd Manâf as the Prophet's first son, because he subsequently married Khadîjah (r.a.). It may also be noted in this connection that Ibn 'Asâkir (d. 571) quotes a report from the same Qatâdah which says that only four sons were born to the Prophet of whom the eldest was named Al-Qâsim.[2] In this report there is no mention of 'Abd Manâf at all.

Thus, to sum up, the report given by Al-Maqdisî on the supposed authority of Qatâdah does not agree with another of the same Qatâdah's report on the same subject cited by Ibn 'Asâkir. Secondly, there is no mention of Qatâdah's informants nor does Al-Maqdisî mention how he received the report said to have been transmitted by Sa'îd ibn 'Abî 'Urûbah who had died about a couple of centuries before him. Thirdly, the report implies that the alleged 'Abd Manâf did not die in childhood while the other two sons of the Prophet did so. But history does not record any son of the Prophet attaining maturity or surviving him. Fourthly, Al-Maqdisî's information is in conflict with that given by all the earlier authorities including Ibn Isḥâq. It would be both arbitrary and unfair to assume that all those earlier authorities were parties to suppressing such an important fact relating to the Prophet as the existence and name of another son for him. Last but not least, if there was an eldest son other than Al-Qâsim, the Prophet's *kunya* would have been "'Abû so-and-so" instead of 'Abû al-Qâsim, for the *kunya* of a person was invariably after his first-born child. Even Al-Maqdisî notes that 'Abû al-Qâsim was the Prophet's *kunya*.[3] For all these reasons the report under discussion is not at all credible.[4]

1. See also Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Diyâr Bakrî (d. 966 H.) *Târîkh al-Khamîs*, Part I., Beirut, n. d, p.263.

2. Ibn 'Asâkir, quoted in Mughalṭây, *Al-Zahr al-Bâsim*, MSS. Leiden Univ. Or. 370 (photocopy with the Madina Islamic University), fol. 96.

3. Al-Maqdisî, *op. cit.*

4. It may be noted here that there is another such report emanating from Hishâm ibn 'Urwah (d. 145 / 146 H.) which says that Khadîjah (r.a) gave birth for the Prophet to two sons before Islam, named respectively 'Abd al-Uzzâ and Al-Qâsim but both of them died before the coming of Islam. (Bukhârî, *Al-Târîkh al-Ṣaghîr*, ed. Maḥmûd Ibrâhîm Zâyd, Part I, Cairo, 1397 / 1977, p. 4). This report too is incredible on the grounds that it is technically *mu'ḍal*, i.e., more than one of its narrators previous to Hishâm ibn 'Urwah are missing, while some of the others subsequent to him, like Ismâ'îl (ibn 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abd Allah ibn 'Uways) is not dependable (see *Tahdhîb al-Tahdhîb*, I., pp. 310-312, No. 568).

Jeffery's second argument that the Prophet, before his call, had married three of his daughters to three idolatrous husbands without anyone noticing at the time any difference in his faith is equally ineffective. There was no prohibition in pre-Islamic Arab society on marriages between persons or families of different religious persuasions. That prohibition in Islam came much later on. Previously to that development such marriages took place in the Arabian society without any noticeable objection being raised or any qulams of conscience being exhibited by any quarter. For instance, the Yathribite leader Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf's mother was a Jewess of Banû al-Naḍîr, while his father, Ashraf, was a polytheist of Banû al-Nabhân.[1] Similarly, though Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl was a monotheist (*ḥanîf*) not practising polytheism, no one objected to his son Sa'îd being married to the polytheist Al-Khaṭṭâb's daughter ('Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb's sister) Fâṭimah before the coming of Islam. Again, Waraqah ibn Nawfal, though a monotheist and a Christian, did not find any difficulty in living peacefully and as a normal member of his polytheistic family and clan. That 'Abû Lahab and his wife persuaded their sons to disband their marriages with the Prophet's daughters was due not really to his change as such in his religious belief, but because he openly denounced the old faith, preached a new one and summoned his people to accept it. The enmity of 'Abû Lahab and the others was excited by this latter aspect of the Prophet's activities. Had he remained silent with his own faith and not attempted to change the faith of his people, no objection would perhaps have been raised against him at all, neither by 'Abû Lahab nor by the others. Jeffery's argument ignores this fact and also the peculiar marital practices in pre-Islamic Arabia. It also fails to distinguish between the state of one's silent and unobtrusive non-observance of polytheistic practices on the one hand and the state of ones open and challenging denunciation of the popular religion coupled with the promulgation of a new faith and steps to secure converts to it, on the other.

As regards the third argument that Muḥammad (ﷺ) by his arbitration and action in resetting the Black Stone participated in rebuilding the Ka'ba, "the House of that al-Lât, al-'Uzza and Manât" against whom he "fulminated" subsequently, Jeffery is mistaken in two ways. The Ka'ba was *not* the house of Al-Lât, Al-'Uzzâ and Manât. They and their shrines were situated respectively at Ṭâ'if, Nakhala and Qudayd (near the Red Sea coast

1. Ibn Hishâm, I., 51.

between Makka and Madina) though they were revered by the Quraysh.[1] Nor was the Ka'ba at Makka sanctified and revered by the Makkans and Arabs in general as the house of their idols, though a good number of them were indeed placed in and around it. In fact a number of shrines of their idols at different places also were called *ka'bas*, such as the Ka'ba at Najran, the Ka'ba at Sindâd (between Kûfa and Baṣra)[2] and the Ka'ba al-Yamaniyyah at Dhû al-Khalaṣah.[3] In so far as the Ka'ba at Makka was concerned, however, the Arabs held it in especial esteem and ascribed to it the preeminent position not as the shrine of any particular idol or as the house of their idols in general, but as the House of Allah and because of its association with the memory of Prophets Ibrahîm and Ismâ'îl. It was also only to this Ka'ba that the Arabs, despite their lapse into idolatry, performed *'umrah* and *ḥajj* in pursuance of the Abrahamic tradition. Hence the Prophet's arbitration and action in re-setting the Black Stone to the Ka'ba was no participation in the building of an idol house, nor is it at all an evidence of his following at that time "peacefully the religion of his people."

Jeffery'a fourth plea is the report of *Musnad* (iv, 222) which Margoliouth cites and which speaks of a neighbour's overhearing the Prophet's conversation with Khadijah in which he (the Prophet) refused to worship Al-Lât and Al-'Uzzâ. The faulty nature of Margoliouth's conclusion on this report, particularly the grammatical objections to applying the neighbour's remark "those were the idols which they used to worship and then go to bed", to the Prophet and his wife, have been shown above.[4] Jeffery attempts to support Margoliouth's conclusion in three ways: (a) He mistranslates the Prophet's statement in the report in order to make it conform to his conclusion. (b) He puts forward an excuse to avoid the grammatical objections to taking the nieghbour's remark as applying to the Prophet and his wife; and (c) he makes a few observations about the implications of the report as a whole to support his conclusion.

Jeffery translates the Prophet's statement: (أي خديجة والله لا أعبد اللات والعزى، والله لا أعبد أبدا) as: "Oh Khadîjah: by Allah, I will not worship al-Lât nor al-

1. See Ibn Hishâm, I., 83-85; Ibn al-Kalbî, *Kitâb al-Aṣnâm*, pp. 13, 16, 44; Yâqût, *Mu'jam al-Buldân*, IV, 16; V, 4, 204.

2. Ibn al-Kalbî, *Kitâb al-Aṣnâm*, 44-45; Ibn Hishâm, I. 83.

3. *Bukhârî*, nos. 4355, 4356, 4357.

4. *Supra*, pp. 196-200.

'Uzzâ: by Allah I will not perform worship again."[1] This translation is faulty in three ways. In the first place, he renders the verb *lâ 'a'budu* (لا أعبد) in both places of the statement in the future tense which is contrary to the grammatical rules. It is to be noted that in this statement the verb *'a'budu* (أعبد) is used twice and both in the imperfect (*muḍâri'* مضارع) form. In Arabic this form is used to mean either the present (*ḥâl* حال) or the future (*mustaqbal* مستقبل) tense. But the general rule is that where in the same statement the verb occurs twice in the same *muḍâri'* form, the first use is to be taken in the present tense (حال) and the second in the future (مستقبل) tense. In addition to this general rule, this is to be so specially and invariably when there are clear indications that the second use of the verb has to be taken in the future tense. In the statement under reference, the verb *'a'budu* in the second place, is followed by the expression *'abadan* (أبدا) which unmistakably indicates that here the verb is in the future tense. The first use of the verb in the statement must therefore be taken to be in the present tense (حال). On these simple rules the correct translation of the Prophet's statement: (... والله لا أعبد اللات والعزى، والله لا أعبد أبدا) would be: "By Allah, I do not worship Al-Lât and Al-'Uzzia; by Allah, I will never worship (them)." The verb in the first instance must be taken in the sense of a simple present tense because in the second instance it is earmarked as the future tense by using *'abadan* (أبدا) with it. And as it cannot be assumed that the Prophet was simply saying that he was at the moment not engaged in the act of worshipping those idols, the first half of the statement must be taken to be an assertion of his habit and practice and the second half as an emphatic refusal to do so in future. In other words the Prophet stated that it was not his practice to worship those idols nor would he ever worship them.

The second fault in Jeffery's translation is his disregard or side-tracking of the meaning of *lâ... 'abadan* (لا... أبدا) which stands for "never". Instead of correctly rendering the meaning of this expression Jeffery imports, and this is the third fault of the translation, the word "again" here, translating the clause as: "I will not perform worship again". The use of *lâ* with *'abadan* in Arabic invariably means "never"; never does the expression mean again". Jeffery makes this three-fold incorrect translation—rendering the verbs in the future tense in both places, side-tracking the meaning of *lâ.. 'abadan* and importing "again" in its stead—obviously to imply that while the Prophet

1. Jeffery, *op. cit.*, 231.

used previously to worship those idols, he now asserted that he would henceforth not do so "again". Such a meaning is totally unjustified by the text.

In addition to this twisting in the translation of the text Jeffery advances an excuse to circumvent the grammatical objections to applying the last sentence of the report, the neighbour's remark, "These were the idols which they used to worship, and then go to bed" to the Prophet and his wife by saying that a modern writer is likely to be meticulous in his use of duals and plurals "but anciently it was not so." He further says that the whole tradition would be pointless "if it does not refer to the household of Muḥammad and Khadîja, and if pressed we could always argue that the plural is used to include the family."[1]

The excuse offered by Jeffery to disregard the grammatical objections is simply poor and unacceptable. The narrators of traditions do not at all appear to be such weaklings in Arabic usage as to be careless about the rules regarding duals and plurals in verbs. Jeffery himself betrays an awareness of the weakness of his position when he says: "if pressed we could always argue that the plural is used to include the family." Yes, the plural is used for the family, i.e. Khadîjah's parental family or the Quraysh family in general, not the family constituted by Khadîjah and her husband on their marriage.

And this in fact brings us to Jeffery's observations about the implications of the tradition in general. He says that the tradition raises the veil from Muḥammad's (ﷺ) domestic life for a moment and that it comes from that period in his "spiritual development when he was beginning to feel the futility of idol worship" either under the influence of "the purer religion around him" or "of those shadowy persons the Ḥanîfs".[2]

The tradition might be raising the veil for a moment from the domestic life of Muḥammad (ﷺ); but it does *not* come from the period of his supposed particular spiritual development under the influences mentioned. For if the Prophet, after having worshipped the idols with Khadîjah for any length of time, had subsequently developed a new attitude towards them she would have been well aware of it and the conversation on the subject would have taken a different form. At least Khadîjah would not have cut short of the subject by saying "leave that Al-Lât, leave that Al-'Uzzâ" and would rather have sought some explanation for her husband's new attitude. Nor

1. *Ibid.*, 232.
2. *Ibid.*, 231.

would the Prophet have replied in the manner he did but would have used some other words indicating the reason for his new attitude, especially as he was talking to his wife. Thus the tenor and purport of the conversation make it amply clear that it took place, if at all, at the very initial stage of their marital life when the Prophet was confronted for the first time with a situation which necessitated a statement of his attitude towards the idols. Most probably it took place when he spent the night for the first time with Khadîjah's parental family or it was the annual occasion falling for the first time after their marraige when the Quraysh used to pay homage to those idols. This explanation of the incident having taken place at the initial stage of their married life would fit in well with everything in the report. It would agree with the correct meaning of the Prophet's statement, as noted above, without the need for manipulating it in order to make it conform to a particular preconception. There would be no need to impute ignorance of grammatical knowledge to the early narrators of traditions, nor would the report be otherwise pointless, as Jeffery imagines. By all canons of consideration the report must be related to a situation at the initial stage of the Prophet's married life with Khadîjah.

In arguing that the tradition comes from a time when Muḥammad (ﷺ) began to feel the futility of idol worship Jeffery in effect admits that in so far as this particular report is concerned it shows that the Prophet henceforth did not adore the idols and ceased worshipping them. This admission, together with the fact that the incident must have taken place not very long after the Prophet's marriage with Khadîjah, invalidate Jeffery's three previous arguments too. For, when it is recognized that the Prophet saw the futility of idol worship and ceased doing so at least since an early stage of his married life, it cannot consistently be argued that he nonetheless named his children, when born, after the idols; nor that he, by his arbitration in resetting the Black Stone to the Ka'ba only five years prior to his call to Prophetood, participated in building a house for the idols; nor that he was still a polytheist when he gave his daughters in marriage to polytheists!

As regards the remaining two points (e & f), namely the tradition regarding Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl's refusal to partake of meat offered to idols and the tradition which alleges that the Prophet once offered a grey sheep to Al-'Uzzâ, Jeffery does not add any new argument or observation. These two traditions have already been discussed in detail;[1] so no further discussion of

1. *Supra*, pp. 197-201.

them is called for.

Before concluding this chapter reference should be made to the views of Watt on this subject. He seems to have drawn on the views of his predecessors and made an amalgam of them. Broadly three specific lines of thought, all of them being of his predecessors, may be identified in his treatment of the subject. He seems to have accepted as an established fact the view that prior to his call to Prophethood Muḥammad (ﷺ) was more or less an idolator. He also adopts the view that the "vague monotheism" prevalent in Arabia on the eve of the rise of Islam, specially the rise of the *ḥanîfs,* was due to the influence of Judaism and Christianity and that Muḥammad (ﷺ) was not quite untouched by that monotheism. Thirdly and more specifically, Watt adopts the view of his preceptor R. Bell who, on the basis of what he considers the message of the early passages of the Qur'ân suggests that even for the first few years of his Prophethood Muḥammad (ﷺ) did not openly speak against the other gods but simply sought to stimulate gratitude to God by stressing his "goodness" and bounty.[1]

Watt incorporates all these lines of thought and suggests that the Prophet did not totally break away from idolatry till the incident of "the Satanic verses" and their abrogation. Deprecating the Muslim scholars' lack of understanding of what he calls the "modern Western concept of gradual development" in the case of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) religious ideas Watt writes: "The truth is that his monotheism was originally, like that of his more enlightened contemporaries, somewhat vague, and in particular was not so strict that the recognition of inferior beings was felt to be incompatible with it. He probably regarded al-Lât, al-'Uzzâ, and Manât as celestial beings of a lower grade than God, in much the same way as Judaism and Christianity have recognized the existence of angels."[2] Earlier, speaking about "what preceded Muḥammad's call and first revelation" Watt writes: "In religion his outlook was presumably the vague monotheism found among the most enlightened Meccans, but in addition he must have looked for some kind of reform in Mecca".[3] While writing these lines Watt, by his own admission,[4] was not so aware as he subsequently became that the concept of Allah as the

1. R. Bell, "The Beginning of Muḥammad's Religious Activities" *T.G.U.O.S.*, VII, 16-24, specially p. 20.

2. Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 104.

3. *Ibid.*, 44.

4. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, Edinburgh, 1988, Preface, VII.

Supreme Being was prevalent in pre Islamic Arabia. Hence in his latest work he somewhat modifies his statement as follows:[1]

"To judge from the witness of the Qur'ân to pre-Islamic religion and from the story of the Satanic verses Muḥammad's original belief may have been in Allah as 'high god' or supreme deity, combined with the lesser local deities whom he may have come to regard as angels who could intercede with the supreme being. There is even a report that he said that he had once sacrificed a sheep to al-'Uzzâ."

These remarks of Watt relate more pointedly to the early phase of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) activities as Prophet. They have therefore been discussed fully a little later on in that connection.[2] Here it may only be pointed out that the remarks are not quite compatible with the theory of gradual development of which Watt is so much cognizant. In the first place, he suggests that prior to his call to Prophethood Muḥammad's (ﷺ) outlook in religion was the "vague monotheism found among the most enlightened Meccans". At the same time Watt states that Muḥammad (ﷺ) spoke only about vague monotheism together with recognition of the lesser gods till the so-called affair of the "Satanic verses," i.e., for upto 3-4 years of his role as Prophet. This is simply inconsistent with the concept of gradual development. For Muḥammad's emergence as Prophet must have been marked by something new and better on his part than what was already known. None would have paid any special attention to him and become his follower if his ideas were not clearly in advance of those of the enlightened Makkans. Secondly, by "the most enlightened Meccans" Watt evidently means the *ḥanîfs*; but he simply confuses when he says that their monotheism "was not so strict that the recognition of inferior beings was felt to be incompatible with it." The monotheism of those enlightened persons, the *ḥanîfs*, might have been vague, but it was clearly and unmistakably a reaction to and a break with the prevalent idolatry. It was neither an off-shoof of idolatry nor did it in any way recognize the efficacy of the "inferior beings". Watt misstates the position of the *ḥanîfs* in order to transfer that position to the Prophet, both of which manoeuvres are not in accord with the concept of gradual development, neither in respect of the *ḥanîfs* nor in respect of the Prophet. Thirdly, the last sentence of Watt's above quoted statement refers to the tradition about the Prophet's having allegedly once offered a sheep to Al-'Uzzâ which Watt's predecessors also cite along with some other reports. This

1. *Ibid.*, 49.
2. *Infra*, chapter XXIII.

report, as shown earlier, is spurious and not worthy of credence.[1] But leaving aside that question, even the text of the report as it is refers obviously to a stage long prior to Muḥammad's (ﷺ) call. While citing this report Watt's predecessors, particularly Jeffery, at least recognizes that prior to his call Muḥammad's (ﷺ) religious attitude underwent a change so much so that he unequivocally refused, while speaking to his wife, to worship Al-Lât and Al-'Uzzâ. Watt's citation of the report by way of substantiating the assertion that the Prophet continued to recognize Al-Lât and Al-'Uzzâ even after his receipt of the call is thus both anachronistic and inconsitent with the others' theory of gradual development. It is also tendentially selective in that Watt does not at all refer to the other report concerning the Prophet's refusal to worship Al-Lât and Al-'Uzzâ which Watt's predecessors specifically note.

1. *Supra*, pp. 197-199.

CHAPTER IX

WATT'S THEORY ABOUT THE *ḤARB AL-FIJÂR* AND THE *ḤILF AL-FUḌÛL*

Watt advances a new theory about the *Ḥarb al-Fijâr* and the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl*, the two most notable events in Makka's socio-political life during the Prophet's adolescence and early youth. It has already been noted that Watt assumes a prolonged trade rivalry between two groups of the Quraysh clans. In explaining the *Ḥarb al-Fijâr* and the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* he extends that rivalry to the sphere of their international relations and international trade. He says that there was not only a prolonged trade rivalry between two groups of the Quraysh clans themselves but also between their supposedly stronger group on the one hand and Ḥîrah-Persia in the north and Yaman in the south on the other, relating this rivalry with the wider conflict between the Byzantine and the Persian empires over imperial, commercial and religious interests. The *Fijâr* wars, according to Watt, were the results of that trade rivalry between the stronger Quraysh clans and Ḥîrah-Persia. In this context he further states:

(a) that the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* was "a later development of the Muṭayyabûn", i.e., of the so-called weaker clans, "and not a general league against injustice";[1]

(b) that it was directed against the stronger clans like 'Abd Shams and Nawfal;[2]

(c) and that it represented an attempt by the weaker group to prevent the stronger group of clans from monopolizing the international trade in their hands.[3]

The following is a brief discussion on these assumptions of Watt's.

The general international situation, particulary the rivalry between the Byzantine and the Persian empire is well-known and it has been treated by many a previous scholar in relating the background to the rise of Islam;[4] but the conclusions drawn from this situation by Watt about the relationship between the Quraysh clans themselves are both novel and untenable. He says

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, 6.
2. *Ibid.*, 6, 15, 32.
3. *Ibid.*, 12-15.
4. See for instance P.K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (first edn. 1937). Chaps. IV & V.

that after the death of Justinian (565 A.C) the struggle between the Byzantine and the Persian empires "entered its final phase" and that by 570 or 575 the Persians drove out the Abyssinians, who were allied with the Byzantines, from "Arabia", i.e. Yaman, and established a regime there favourable to Persia, "though not strictly controlled from the metropolis."[1] Having thus said that the Persian influence thus established over Yaman was not quite effective, Watt states immediately: "By means of the Lakhmid princes of al-Ḥîrah... the Persians tried to direct the overland trade from the Yemen to Persia". And then, by way of substantiating this last statement, he adds: "The war of the Fijâr and the battle of Dhû Qâr arose out of Persian caravans from al-Ḥîrah to the Yemen."[2]

Now, it should be noted that the principality of Ḥîrah on the border of Persia was of course subordinate to the latter. But that principality was separated from Yaman by the whole expanse of the Arabian peninsula over which the Persian empire had no control whatsoever. Nor did the battle of Dhû Qâr take place out of "Persian caravans from al-Ḥîrah to the Yemen", as Watt so categorically says. It arose out of some personal differences between the Persian ruler and the prince of Ḥîrah, Nu'mân ibn Mundhir and it could at the most be regarded as yet another phase in the Persian attempts to control that principality.[3] So far as the *Fijâr* war is concerned, however, a number of facts have been twisted in Watt's above mentioned statement. In the first place, there is no indication in the sources that the caravan which Nu'mân ibn Mundhir despatched and over which the fourth *Fijâr* war broke out,[4] was sent on behalf of Persia or in her interest. Secondly, the trade caravan was sent to the 'Ukâẓ fair, near Ṭâ'if, and not towards Yaman. None of the authorities makes the slightest allusion to the caravan having been intended for that land. Thirdly, the incident which has thus been generalized as the cause of the *Fijâr* wars related to the fourth of the series of wars known as the *Fijâr* wars. The three previous wars in the series had each different causes, not at all related to the international trading activities. Fourthly, the hostile act which precipitated the fourth war was not an attack upon Nu'mân's caravan as such, nor upon any individual trader of Ḥîrah, but

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, 12.
2. *Ibid.*
3. See for details Ibn Kathîr, *Al-Kâmil Fî al-Târîkh*, ed. 'Abû al-Fidâ' 'Abd Allah al-Qâḍî, Vol. I., Beirut, 1407 / 1987, pp. 374-380; Mas 'ûdî, *Murûj etc.*, I., 278.
4. *Supra*, pp. 167-168.

upon an inhabitant of Ṭâ'if, 'Urwah, who was a personal rival of the assailant, Barrâḍ, of Makka, who was outwitted by the former in the bid for acting as "guarantor" for the caravan. Thus both the assailant and the victim were in favour of the caravan's coming to Ṭâ'if.

Thus the theory of Persia's attempt "to direct the overland route from the Yemen to Persia" is based on a number of mistaken assumptions. Its weakness is clear even from Watt's own statement made a little earlier in his work where he notes that the regime in Yaman was not quite controlled by the "metropolis", i.e., the Persian capital. The same fact is reiterated by him a couple of pages subsequently where he more clearly states: "It should be kept in mind, however, that this conquest [i.e. of Yaman by Persia] was the result of a sea-borne expedition, and that therefore the province was not firmly held, while the remainder of Arabia was not controlled by the Persians."[1] This being the real situation, how could one suggest at the same time that Persia attempted to direct the overland route from Yaman to Persia through the entire peninsula over which she had no control? If she really intended to control the import or export trade with Yaman, it would have been far less hazardous and easier for her to do so by the sea route or, if possible, by an alternative eastern Arabian coast route and not vicariously through Ḥîrah and via the western Arabian land route.

But to return to Watt's narrative. After having introduced his theory in the above mentioned way he asks in the very following paragraph of his text: "What was the position of Mecca in this struggle of the giants?" In reply he suggests that it would appear from a remark made by Ibn Qutaybah that Quṣayy, who established the supremacy of the Quraysh at Makka as against the Khuzâ'ah, did so with help received from the Ghassanids or other Byzantine allies, and that this "conquest" of Makka by Quṣayy was bound up with the development of that city's trade with Syria. "It would seem that", continues Watt, "for some time after Quṣayy the route from the Yemen to Mecca was mainly in the hands of the Yamanis; a Yamani merchant was bringing goods to Mecca at the formation of the confederacy of the Fuḍûl (C. 580). If Mecca was thus mainly concerned with the northward trade, it would be necessary to be on good terms with the Byzantines and their allies."[2]

1. Watt, *op. cit.*, 14.
2. *Ibid.*, 13.

Now, we need not find fault with the assumption of a tradition of friendship between the Byzantines and the Quraysh; nor with the latter's necessity, for the sake of the northward trade, "to be on good terms with the Byzantines and their allies". It is also understandable that the route from Yaman to Makka should be "mainly in the hands of the Yamanis". But it was not for "some time", as Watt puts it, but for over a century since Quṣayy's time, for Muḥammad (ﷺ) during whose youth the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* came into being and up to which time, according to Watt, the route was in the hands of the Yamanis, was the fifth in the line of descent from Quṣayy. Also the date indicated by Watt, C. 580, as the date of the *Ḥilf*, is not correct. At the time of its formation the Prophet was a young man of more than 20 years of age and he was present at the meeting in which it was formed, which facts would place the event around 590 at the earliest.

But what is stated next by Watt is somewhat confusing. Thus by way of elucidating the Quraysh's good relationship with the Byzantines he reverts to the conquest of Yaman by the Abyssinians and stresses that since the relations between the Abyssinians and the Byzantines were friendly, it was during this period of "comparative peace that the Meccans developed their trade on a large scale and sent their caravans in all directions".[1] Having thus far advanced his theme of friendship between Makka on the one hand and the Byzantines and the Abyssinians on the other Watt finds himself confronted with the stark fact of the Abyssinian viceroy Abrahah's expedition against Makka. Hence he makes a quick modification and adds: "Relations with the Abyssinians must have deteriorated, however, for towards the end of the occupation the viceroy Abrahah led an expedition against Mecca". Why the presumed good relations with the Abyssinian regime should have detriorated is not at all indicated by Watt.

Like many others, however, Watt refers to the religious as well as commercial motives of Abrahah and then makes a very far-fetched and unjustifiable assumption with regard to 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's negotiations with the invader saying, as noted earlier,[2] that "'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was presumably trying to get support from the Abyssinians against his rivals among Quraysh, such as the clans of 'Abd Shams, Nawfal, and Makhzûm. The two former of these had apparently by this time seized most of the trade with Syria and the

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Supra*, pp. 138-139.

Yemen which had formerly belonged to Hâshim and al-Muṭṭalib."[1]

Before making this last statement Watt has spoken only of the traditional friendship of Makka with the Byzantines, making particular mention that the four sons of 'Abd Manâf, namely, 'Abd Shams, Hâshim, al-Muṭṭalib and Nawfal, cultivated trade relations respectively with Abyssinia, Syria, Yaman and Iraq. He has not hitherto referred to a single fact showing the growth of a trade rivalry between the sons of Hâshim and al-Muṭṭalib on the one hand those of 'Abd Shams and Nawfal on the other. Now, all of a sudden, being confronted with the fact of Abrahah's invasion, he assumes the existence of such a situation, imputes a selfish motive to 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib in the matter of his negotiation with Abrahah and, further, on the basis of this latter assumption, proceeds to presume that the clans of 'Abd Shams and Nawfal "had apparently by this time seized most of the trade with Syria and the Yemen which had formerly belonged to Hâshim and al-Muṭṭalib." If relations with Abyssinians deteriorated leading to Abrahah's invasion, as surely they did and as Watt admits they did, how could the clans of 'Abd Shams and Nawfal at the same time seize the trade with Abyssinia and Yaman by ousting the clans of Hâshim and al-Muṭṭalib from there remains an enigma. As already shown,[2] Watt's allegation against 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib is simply untenable.

Still more confusing is the statement about the attitude of the supposedly wealthier Quraysh clans. Watt says: "Against the pro-Abyssinian policy of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib the wealthier clans would stand for a policy of neutrality, which was clearly in their best interest."[3] One would be tempted to ask: neutrality with reference to what or whom? If 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib intended, as Watt assumes, to turn the table, with Abyssinian cooperation, upon the supposedly wealthier clans, how could the latter's interest be served by their remaining neutral in the situation and thus allowing their interests to suffer by default? Again, Abrahah came to destroy the Ka'ba and the commercial importance of Makka. How could then the Makkan commercial élite, however friendly their relations with the Byzantines might have been, remain inactive or neutral in the matter? The Persians were not yet on the scene so that one could not take the neutrality to be one between those two powers. In

1. Watt, *op. cit.*, 14.
2. *Supra*, pp. 138-140.
3. Watt, *op. cit.*, 14.

fact one must confess one's inability to make any head or tail of this supposed "policy of neutrality" on the part of the clans of ʻAbd Shams and others.

"Neutrality was still more necessary for Mecca", continues Watt, "after the Persian conquest of South Arabia."[1] This sentence of Watt's shows that when he speaks of neutrality in his previous paragraph he does not have the Persians in view and therefore he there implied by neutrality continuance of the traditional friendship with the Byzantines. Be that as it may, what he says next about the exact nature of the Persian position in Arabia does not really suggest any need for the Makknans to be so particular about such neutrality. For, immediately after having penned the above noted sentence Watt draws his readers' attention to the fact that the Persian influence in south Arabia was ineffective "while the remainder of Arabia was not controlled" by it so that the Makkans "made good use of this situation to consolidate their power". And by way of illustrating this latter proposition he repeats his view about the origin of the *Fijâr* war and says: "The war of the *Fijâr*, which probably began some time after the expulsion of the Abyssinians, was the result of an unprovoked attack by an ally of Mecca on a caravan from al-Ḥîrah to the Yemen by way of at-Ṭâ'if. This would mean, in economic terms, that the Meccans were trying either to close this route altogether or to ensure that they had some control over it."[2]

Thus would Watt have us believe that because of the traditional friendship with the Byzantines the Makkan commercial élite would remain "neutral", i.e., inactive, during Abrahah's attack upon their city and, when even the Persians expelled the Abyssinians from south Arabia, they (the Makkan leaders) would attempt to close or control the land route as against Ḥirah-Persia's trade with south Arabia by way of" Ṭâ'if! The most conspicuous fallacy of the assumption lies in the fact that the caravan from Ḥîrah on which the whole theory is based was not at all intended for Yaman, as already pointed out. It may be noted that while earlier (at his p. 12) Watt speaks of "Persian caravans from al-Ḥirâh to the Yemen", in the present instance he modifies his statement speaking of "a caravan from al-Ḥîrah" and adding "by way of al-Ṭâ'if" to the supposed destination, Yaman. The

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ibid.*

modification of "a caravan" is correct; but the statement as a whole is misleading. It was only one caravan, not caravans; it was also sent from Ḥîrah and to Ṭâ'if, i.e., to the 'Ukâẓ fair near it, but not "by way of" it to Yaman. The attack was made, as already pointed out, not upon the caravan as such but upon its Ṭâ'ifian guarantor. It was made by a personal rival of his, not by or on behalf of the Makkan traders. Nor was the act in any way intended for closing the route altogether against Ḥîrah, nor for establishing the Makkans' control over it. In fact, except for this caravan from Ḥîrah to the 'Ukâẓ fair Watt has not brought forward any other instance showing that Ḥîrah or Persia carried on or attempted to carry on trade with Yaman via Ṭâ'if. And since this very assumption of the caravan having been intended for Yaman is wrong, the conclusion based upon it, namely, that the Quraysh leaders, by an attack on it, wanted to close the route altogether against Ḥîrah or Persia or to have some control over it is totally wrong. The sequel also does not in any way support the assumption. For the war which broke out over the incident was confined to hostilities between Makka and Ṭâ'if. Neither Ḥîrah nor Persia was involved in the conflict, neither directly, nor indirectly. If the original incident had at all been one against their interests, they would surely have sided with Ṭâ'if in the war, at least by retaliating upon Makkan trade with Iraq and Yaman, the more so because the latter country was now under Persian control. There is no record whatsoever that such was the case.

Indeed, there was no question of the Makkans' preventing the caravan from coming to Ṭâ'if or any other place. The quarrel, as already pointed out, arose simply out of the personal rivalry of two individuals, each of whom wanted the caravan should come to Ṭâ'if ('Ukâẓ). That the attack by the Makkan Barrâḍ upon his Ṭâ'ifian rival 'Urwah was personal and was made without any Makkan instigation is recognized by Watt himself only three pages earlier in his work where he unequivocally says that "the action was for him [Barrâḍ] primarily the pursuance of his own personal ends and not obedience to Makkan orders."[1] It is therefore very strange that having thus known and stated the exact nature of the incident Watt has subsequently twisted and utilized it to build up his theory of a trade war between Makka and Ḥîrah-Persia and, on that basis, a whole series of other assumptions and speculations.

Such a trade war would not even appear logical; for the Makkans were

1. *Ibid.*, 11.

carrying on trade with, among other places, Syria and Iraq in the north and Yaman and Abyssinia in the south and south-west. It was thus in their best interest to remain on good terms not only with the Byzantines but also with the others. The Quraysh traders could not just be that fool to attack a Ḥîran or Yamani caravan nearer Makka and thus hazard themselves to a certainty of similar or even worse retaliatory attacks on their own caravans by the others near their homes. Such irresponsible acts were all the more unlikely on their part in view of the fact, which Watt also points out, that the Quraysh leaders needed the cooperation of the tribes lying on the trade routes and often "would pay a chief for safe-conduct through his territory, for water and other supplies."[1] The sort of trade monopolistic ambitions laid by Watt at the door of the Makkan leaders would require the adhesion and cooperation of all the heterogeneous tribes along the routes north and south of Makka. The existence of such a *zollverein*, however, could not be conceived of for the Arabian peninsula in the late sixth or early seventh century A.C. On the contrary, the fact that Ṭâ'if allied with some other tribes were ranged against Makka in the *Fijâr* war argues as much against such an economic union as against Watt's theory of a confederacy of west Arabian tribes for military purposes under Makkan hegemony.

Watt would not however simply make the Quraysh leaders attempt to prevent the caravans from Ḥîrah from coming up to Ṭa'if; he would have us believe also that they wanted to prevent the Yamani caravans too from coming to the north, not even up to Makka. Indeed, it is not only on the basis of such assumptions of Makkan trade war simultaneously with the northerners and the southerners but also on the assumption of an acute trade rivalry between two groups of the Quraysh clans of Makka itself that Watt unfolds his thesis about the nature of the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* as follows:[2]

"Against this background, the confederacy of the Fuḍûl .... takes on a new significance." The refusal of a Sahmî to pay for goods received from a Yamani merchant and the reaction of Banû Hâshim and the other clans, writes Watt, suggest that it marked a significant new trend in policy — "the climax of an attempt by the wealthier clans to exclude the Yamanis from the southern trade, and to concentrate it in their hands." Accordding to Watt, Banû Hâshim and the other clans were not sufficiently strong financially to

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ibid.*, 15.

run their own caravans to Yaman, but "made something out of dealings with Yamani merchants in Mecca". Hence, if the caravans to Yaman were entirely controlled by clans like 'Abd Shams and Makhzûm, then the lesser clans "might have no goods to carry north to Syria; or else they would be admitted to share in caravans but only on the terms prescribed by the wealthier merchants..."

Thus does Watt conclude that because a Sahmî individual (Al-'Âṣ ibn Wâ'il) refused to pay for goods he had obtained from a visiting Yamanî merchant and because Banû Hâshim and some other clans formed the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* as its sequel, the so-called "wealthier clans" like 'Abd Shams and Makhzûm must have been attempting to monopolize the sending of caravans to Yaman making the "lesser clans" thus fear that in that case they would "have no goods to carry north to Syria." Interestingly enough, just on the previous page of his text Watt has suggested that even before Abrahah's invasion Banû 'Abd Shams and Nawfal had "seized most of the trade with Syria and the Yemen which had formerly belonged to Hâshim and al-Muṭṭalib."[1] If such had been the situation some twenty years before the formation of the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl*, it is not understandable why Banû 'Abd Shams and their allies should still try to monopolize the caravans to Yaman. The case in the present instance is that of non-payment to a visting Yamanî merchant for his goods, not that of a Makkan caravan proceeding to Yaman. Therefore the question which suggests itself is: How could the "wealthier" clans ensure the safety of their caravans to Yaman while they themselves maltreated the Yamanîs at Makka or prevented them from coming there? How, again, could they expect to succeed in establishing such a monopoly when, as Watt assumes, a group of other clans at Makka itself, however less affluent, were opposed to such a policy? But then Watt's statement that Banû Hâshim and the other clans who formed the *Ḥilf* were not sufficiently strong financially "to run their own caravans to the Yemen" is his supposition only, which is contradicted even by the facts admitted by himself. The leading part in the formation of the *Ḥilf* was played by 'Abd Allah ibn Jud'ân of Banû Taym who, by Watt's own admission, was "one of the chief men of Mecca at the beginning of the war of the Fijâr."[2] Indeed he was, according to the sources, one of the richest, if not the richest man at Makka at the time. Again, even if 'Abû Ṭâlib's material position declined some years subsequently to the formation of the *Ḥilf*,

1. *Ibid.*, 14.
2. *Ibid.*, 32.

there were others of his clans like 'Abû Lahab and 'Abbâs who could stand comparison in wealth to many of Banû 'Abd Shams and Banû Makhzûm. Moreover Banû Asad, who were a member of the *Ḥilf*, were quite rich running their trade caravans to different places. The wares and caravan of Khadîjah (r.a.), who belonged to that clan, are stated by the authorities to be almost equal to those of all the other traders of Makka when the Prophet led her caravan to Syria some five years after the formation of the *Ḥilf*. This fact, as well as the well-known incident of 'Abû Ṭâlib's trade travel to Syria taking the boy Muḥammad (ﷺ) with him contradict Watt's suggestion that Banû Hâshim had been ousted from the field of Syrian trade as early as the time of Abrahah's invasion. The statements that the "lesser" clans were not financially able to run caravans to Yaman and therefore "made something out of dealings with Yamanî merchants in Mecca" on the one hand, and that if caravans to Yaman were "entirely controlled by clans like 'Abd Shams and Makhzûm" those "lesser" clans would have "no goods to carry north to Syria", on the other, are contradictory to each other. For, if they were able and used to run their caravans north to Syria, as implied here, there is no reason why they should not be able to run their caravans to Yaman as well. Moreover, if they were so poor as not to be able to run caravans to Yaman, as Watt assumes, that would mean a virtual and natural monoploy for the supposedly wealthy clans over that trade; and in that case there would be no need for them to have recourse to such an extraordinary act as the spoliation of a visiting Yamanî merchant to secure that monoploy. In fact, if the intention had been simply to prevent the "lesser clans" from obtaining goods even from a visiting Yamanî merchant, the simple business common sense would have dictated the "wealthier" clans to forestall their rivals by purchasing the Yamanî's goods and paying him off, instead of spoliating him and thereby jeopardizing the fate of the Makkan caravans in Yaman.

Thus the assumptions on which Watt bases his theory about the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* are completely wrong and untenable. He assumes the existence of an acute inter-clan trade rivalry at Makka at the time of Abrahah's invasion, which had taken place at least twenty years prior to the formation of the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl*. He does not cite a single incident, neither before Abrahah's invasion nor after it for twenty years, to show that there did exist such a prolonged internecine trade war. But since the *Ḥilf* was formed by Banû Hâshim and some other like-minded clans and since the immediate occasion for it was the deceiving of a Yamanî merchant at Makka by a man of Banû Sahm,

Watt has used it as a posteriori evidence of an acute trade rivalry between the two groups of Quraysh clans and has given that presumed rivalry a sort of retrospective effect since before Abrahah's invasion, projecting it into the *Fijâr* war. He does so obviously by closing his eyes not only to the facts mentioned above but also to a very material fact that Banû Hâshim and the others of their group fought shoulder to shoulder with the so-called wealthier clans in the whole series of the fourth *Fijâr* war. Had that war been occasioned by the "wealthier" clans' monopolistic designs at the cost of the so-called "lesser" clans, as Watt suggests, the latter would not have made common cause with the former in that war.

Some other inaccuracies in Watt's assumption regarding the *Ḥilf* may be noted. That it was formed mainly at the instance of the *Muṭayyabûn* was pointed out, among others, by Ḥalabî;[1] but it was not exclusively confined to that group. The story of a conversation between *Khalîfah* ʻAbd al-Malik and a member of Banû Nawfal which Ibn Isḥaq records and which Watt himself notes shows that both Banû ʻAbd Shams and Banû Nawfal had entered the *Ḥilf* though they subsequently left it.[2] That Banû Asad also joined it is admitted by Watt.[3] Nor was the *Ḥilf* an alliance of the weaker and poorer clans against the stronger and wealthier clans. That it was not weak or ineffective is proved by the fact that the offender against the Yamanî merchant, Al-ʻÂṣ ibn Wâ'il of Banû Sahm was immediately brought to his knees, in spite of his supposed strong connections, and was made to pay the Yamani his due.[4] Significantly enough, there is nothing on record to show that the so-called wealthier and stronger group, in whose interest he is said to have commited the ill-advised act, did anything to come to his aid as against the coercive action of the *Ḥilf*, nor do they appear to have made any other move to counteract the latter's policy and influence. Watt does not at all allude to this remarkable silence and inactivity on the part of that group, not to speak of explaining it, although he emphasizes that Al-ʻÂṣ ibn Wâ'il's action marked the "climax of an attempt by the wealthier clans" to monopolize the southern trade. The obvious explanation of this situation is that what Al-ʻÂṣ did was entirely his personal folly having nothing to do with the supposed monopolistic endeavours of his group of clans. That these clans declined to inter-

1. *Supra*, p. 171.
2. Watt, *op. cit.*, 6.
3. *Ibid.*, 7, 92.
4. *Supra*, p. 171.

fere on behalf of the Yamanî was due to their clannish spirit and old sense of propriety in supporting a clan member or an ally at any event; but when they found that the *Ḥilf* had taken up the issue on a higher principle of justice and fairplay they quickly recognized that what the *Ḥilf* was doing was in the common interest of all. That is why they silently passed over the affair and implicitly acquiesced in the policy of the *Ḥilf*.

The *Ḥilf* indeed marked a "significant" trend in policy; but that trend was not a reaction to the supposed monopolistic attempts of the "wealthier" clans. The *Fijâr* wars had their origin in the rash act of a hot-headed individual and an equally irrational and false sense of tribal honour in supporting each and every clan member or client irrespective of the merits of the case. But the loss of trade and of men and money must have made the Quraysh aware of the folly of blind adherence to that policy. This realization was reinforced by the incident, closely following the conclusion of the *Fijâr* war, of the spoliation of the Yamanî merchant by Al-'Âṣ ibn Wâ'il of Banû Sahm which exposed the Makkan merchants to retaliatory measures by the Yamanîs and the tribes allied to them in the south. Hence the saner and more sober elements of Makka felt the need for enforcing a minimum standard of justice and fairplay for the sake of smoothly running the society and the Makkan mercantile operations. It was this need which gave birth to the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl*. Watt himself seems to touch on the point at a later stage in his work, though in a different context, where he stresses that "the nomadic virtue of fidelity in the keeping of trusts is certainly important, for a minimum level of business integrity is necessary in order to inspire that confidence which oils the wheels of trade; the confederation of the Fuḍûl seems to have originated in a protest against unscrupulously dishonest practices."[1] Indeed, the *Ḥilf* had its origin in a desire to maintain a minimum level of business integrity and in a protest against dishonest practices. Neither it, nor the *Fijâr* war was the result of a trade rivalry between two groups of the Quraysh clans or of the mercantile élite's attempt to monopolize the trade route between Ḥîrah-Persia on the one hand and Yaman on the other. And in so far as Watt recognizes that the *Ḥilf* was a protest against dishonest practices, he in effect contradicts his earlier remark[2] that it was not a league against injustice as such. Incidentally, J.W. Fück apparently adopts Watt's view about the

1. Watt, *op. cit.*, 74.
2. *Ibid.*, 6.

Fijâr war and is consequently mistaken in stating that its aim "was the control of the trade routes in the Nadjd and consequently the benefit of the great gains which this trade offered."[1]

1. *Encyclopedia of Islam*, New Edition, Vol. II, Leiden, 1983, P. 884, article on *Fidjâr*.

CHAPTER X

THE ALLEGATION OF AMBITION AND PREPARATION

It has been alleged that the Prophet was an ambitious person who since an early age had made preparations for the role he subsequently played. As an instance of this alleged ambition it has been suggested that since early youth he had cultivated his linguistic and poetical skill which he subsequently made use of in composing the Qur'ân. Further, it has been said that the traditional view of his being an illiterate person is not quite correct and that at least he knew reading and writing to some extent. The present chapter examines these statements and views of the orientalists.

I: ON THE THEME OF AMBITION IN GENERAL

Both Muir and Margoliouth speak very distinctly about the Prophet's alleged ambition. "Behind the quiet retiring exterior of Mahomet", writes Muir, "lay hid a high resolve, a singleness and unity of purpose, a strength and fixedness of will, a sublime determination, destined to achieve the marvellous work of bowing towards himself the heart of all Arabia as the heart of one man."[1] This ambition, adds Muir, was reinforced after Muḥammad's (ﷺ) arbitration in re-setting the Black Stone at the time of rebuilding the Ka'ba which "prompted the idea of his being chosen of God to be the Prophet of his people."[2]

Speaking in the same strain Margoliouth asserts: "We know, from the Koran, that Mohammed was a young man of promise" and that "of his ambition we have evidence in the comfort which his notoriety afforded him at a time when few things were going well with his project: Have we not expanded thy breast and exalted thy name? is the form which the divine consolation takes, when the Prophet is in trouble. Expansion of the breast, the organization of life about a new centre... and celebrity were then things for which he yearned."[3] Margoliouth even suggests that it was the Prophet's ambition and love for achieving personal distinction which prompted him to participate in the *Fijâr war*.[4]

On his part Watt also advances similar views though he does not speci-

1. W. Muir, *The Life of Maḥomet*, 3rd edn., 25-26.
2. *Ibid.*, 29.
3. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, 64-65.
4. *Ibid.*, 65.

fically employ the term 'ambition' in his statements. Instead, he speaks of the Prophet's "consciousness" of his "great organizing ability" and adds a psychological dimension to that consciousness. Watt says that the Prophet was actuated by a "sense of deprivation" which was produced, first, by the absence of a father during his childhood and, secondly, by "his exclusion from the most lucrative trade."[1] The hint for this supposed sense of deprivation on the Prophet's part because of his being a posthumous child seems to have been made by Margoliouth, for he states in connection with the Prophet's childhood that the "condition of a fatherless lad was not altogether desirable".[2] Be that as it may, Watt definitely follows Margoliouth in citing the Qur'ânic evidence of divine consolation to the Prophet as a mark of his "preparation for his work as Messenger of God", with the only difference that while the latter invokes the evidence of *sûrah* 94, Watt does that of *sûrah* 93. Thus, describing the years that followed the Prophet's marriage to Khadîjah (r.a.) as "years of preparation for the work that lay ahead, Watt gives a translation of *'âyahs* 6-8 of *sûrah* 93[3] and observes that this passage "seems to refer to Muḥammad's early experiences" and that from this "we might perhaps argue that one stage in his development was the realization that the hand of God had been supporting him despite his misfortunes."[4] Citing the same passage, with a slightly different translation, in his latest work and similarly referring to the Prophet's early life and "preparation for his work as Messenger of God" Watt states: "The absence of a father must have produced a sense of deprivation in Muḥammad, and the real experience of poverty as a young man may well have nourished the sense of deprivation."[5] "It was most probably his exclusion from the most lucrative trade", concludes Watt, "coupled with his consciousness of having great organizing ability, that made Muhammad turn to brood over the general state of affairs in Mecca."[6]

Thus do the orientalists suggest ambition and preparation on the Prophet's part. It must at once be pointed out that this assumption of personal ambition

1. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 50-51.

2. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, 46.

3. The text runs as follows: ﴿ألم يجدك يتيما فآوى... ووجدك عائلا فأغنى﴾ "Did He not find thee an orphan and give thee shelter?... find thee poor and enrich thee?"

4. Watt, *M. at M.*, 39.

5. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 50-51.

6. *Ibid.*, 50.

on his part, and of preparation by him to play the role of a Prophet-reformer is totally groundless and is not at all sustained by the sources, neither by the text of the Qur'ân, nor by that of the traditions. Margoliouth's innuendo that the Prophet participated in the *Fijâr* war to gain personal distinction is totally untenable and does not call for argumentaion. Here his handling of the Qur'ânic evidence in support of the allegation of ambition may be noted. In support of his statement that "Mohammed was a young man of promise" Margoliouth cites the authority of *sûrah* XI (Hûd), *'âyah* 65.[1] The citation is completely wrong and irralevant. The *'âyah* runs as follows:

﴿فعقروها فقال تمتعوا فى داركم ثلـٰثة أيام ذلك وعد غير مكذوب﴾ (١١: ٦٥)

"But they humstrung her (the she camel), so he (Prophet Ṣâliḥ) said: Enjoy yourselves in your houses for three days. That is a promise not to be belied."(11:65) This statement, indeed the whole section here, refers to Prophet Ṣâliḥ and his warning to his people for their continued disobodience and the retribution that ultimately befell them. The "promise" (وعد) alluded to in the *'âyah* has reference to the warning of retribution which was not belied. By no stretch of the imagination could it be construed to refer to the early promise and determination of Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ).

In this connection Margoliouth also quotes, without citing it, from *sûrah* 94, giving the translation of its *'âyahs* 1 and 4 as a continuous sentence, omitting the two intermediate *'âyahs* as: "Have we not expanded thy breast and exalted thy name?"[2]

Admitting that the passage is a divine consolation to the Prophet at a moment of dejection, it is difficult to see how it refers to his ambition and resolve in his early life and to his yearning for celebrity, as Margoliouth concludes from it. Clearly his citation of 11:65 in support of the allegeation of "early promise" on the Prophet"s part is misleading; while his interpretation of the passage from *sûrah* 94 is wrong and inappropriate.

The same remote and inappropriate construction has been put in this connection by Watt on the Qur'ânic passage 93:6-8 (*sûrat al-Ḍuḥâ*). There is no doubt that the passage in question refers to the Prophet's situation in life prior to his marriage with Khadîjah (r.a.). It is also evident that it indicates a "realization on his part "that the hand of God had been supporting him despite his misfortunes." But that realization was unmistakably posterior to

1. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, 64.
2. *Ibid.*, 65.

his call to prophethood and cannot be taken to refer to his state of mind prior to that event. Nor could it imply his mental preparation before the call. Nor does the passage sustain the assumption of a sense of deprivation on the Prophet's part. On the contrary, the predominant note in it is that of satisfaction and gratitude for the favourable change in his situation brought about by the hand of God. Whatever sense of deprivation he might have supposedly suffered from, it had clearly yielded place to an unmistakable sense of satisfaction and gratitude after his marriage with Khadîjah (r.a.). And that changed situation and happiness had been continuing for at least 15 years before the coming of the revelation to him, that is, for the very material period which Watt characterizes as the period of "preparation".

Again, the assumption of the Prophet's "exclusion from the most lucrative trade" is also worng. Watt of course cites in this connection the well-known Qur'ânic statement (43:31) "Why was not the Qur'ân sent down to some important man (*'aẓîm*) of the two towns (*qaryatayn*)?"[1] This passage indicates, as is admitted on all hands, that the Prophet was not at the time of his call one of the leading men of the two towns, Makka and Ṭâ'if. But that does not necessarily mean his "exclusion" as such from the "most lucrative trade". In fact, the theory of a trade rivalry between Banû Hâshim and some other Quraysh clans and the probable exclusion of Muḥammad (ﷺ) from the most profitable commercial operations, on which Watt bases a number of his conclusions, is, as shown earlier, groundless and totally untenable.[2] On the contrary the expression *'aghnâ* (أغنى), which is the keyword in 93:8, means, as Watt himself recognizes, not only possession of substantial wealth but also, in Watt's own words, "a place of relative independence and influence in the community." This is confirmed by the well-known fact, also admitted by Watt, that the Prophet, on the eve of his call, had entered into matrimonial relationships with the wealthy and influential 'Abû Lahab on the one hand, and with another very wealthy member of Banû Makhzûm, on the other. Thus the suggestion that during the fifteen years from his marriage with Khadîjah (r.a.) to his call to prophethood a sense of deprivation due to poverty and exclusion from the most lucrative trade etc, "made Muḥammad brood over the general state of affairs in Mecca" and ultimately play the role of a Prophet-reformer is both antithetical to the tenor and purport of *sûrah*

1. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 50.
2. *Supra*, pp. 189-190.

93 and contray to the well-known facts of his life relating to that material period.

Whatever might have been the state of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) mind during the years preceding his call, there is no doubt that he did not suffer from any sense of deprivation. Nor did he make any plans and preparation for playing the part of a Prophet. This is clearly evidenced by the Qur'ânic passage 28:86 which states:

﴿وما كنت ترجوا أن يلقىٰ إليك الكتـٰب إلا رحمة من ربك...﴾ (٢٨:٨٦)

"You were not wont to expect that the book would be sent down on you; but (it has been given you) as a mercy from your Lord..." (28:86).

This unequivocal statement of the Qur'ân decisively negatives any ambition or intention on Muḥammad's (ﷺ) part to become a Prophet, though he had occasionally engaged himself in solitary stay and contemplation prior to the receipt of revelation. Nor did he ever exhibit by his deeds and demeanour any ambition or intention of becoming a leader in his community, not to speak of becoming a Prophet. It is common knowledge that a leader does not emerge on the scene all of a sudden but through a process of gradual development and preparation which seldom remains concealed from the view and observation of his own people and immediate society. The conduct and activities of the would-be-leader make his society aware of his ambition. Yet, there is nothing on record to suggest that such was the case with Muḥammad (ﷺ). If he ever had entertained any plan and made any preparation for becoming a leader, that would have been known to his people in some way or other and that would invariably have formed an important item of criticism by his subsequent opponents. But nothing of the kind is discernible from the sources. Till the receipt of the revelation he had not made any mark, by his deeds or intentions, as an aspriant to leadership in his society. Truly did his adversaries point out, as the Qur'ânic passage 43:31 noticed above shows, that he was not that important a man in the two towns to be the Prophet. Nothing could be a stronger testimony to the lack of preparation and ambition on his part than this statement of the Qur'ân.

That the coming of revelation was a sudden and unexpected development to Muḥammad (ﷺ) is evident also from the famous tradition recording his immediate reaction to the event. He hurried back home from the mount Ḥirâ' bewildered and trembling in terror and asked his wife to cover him. Then he narrated to her what had happened to him in the cave, expressing

his fear that something untoward was perhaps going to happen to him, perhaps he was going to die. She comforted and assured him, saying that Allah could not mean any harm to him since he was so good and honest a man, always speaking the truth, entertaining guests and helping his relatives and the needy, etc. After the initial shock was over she took him to to her knowledgeable cousin Waraqah ibn Nawfal to ascertain the significance of her husband's experience in the cave of Ḥirâ'. Waraqah, after having heard about the incident, expressed his studied opinion that Muḥammad (ﷺ) had received a commission from Allah similar to what had been previously received by Prophet Mûsâ and that this would involve him (Muḥammad, ﷺ) in trouble with his own people. This last remark caused further surprise in him.[1]

Now, as Maudûdî points out,[2] several aspects of this report need to be noted carefully. In the first place, the spectacle we get of the Prophet here is that of a person who is clearly bewildered and confused at some unexpected and extraordinary development. Had he ever entertained any ambition, made preparations for playing the role of a Prophet or religious leader and expected or solicited any divine communication being made to him, his reaction would have been quite different. He would not have been bewildered and terrified, but would rather have returned from mount Ḥirâ' happy and confident in the success of his endeavours and expectations, not needing consolation and assurance from anyone else, and would have straightway proceeded to proclaim his commission and mission.

Secondly, the reaction of Khadîjah (r.a.) is equally significant. Had her husband been ambitious and making any preparation for playing the role of a social or religious reformer, that fact, of all perons on earth, would have been known at least to her. Hence, when the Prophet returned from mount Ḥirâ' with his new experience, she would have simply congratulated him on the ultimate success of his exercises and expectations and, instead of taking him to her cousin to obtain his opinion, would have taken other appropriate steps to embark her husband on his new role.

Thirdly, the attitude of Waraqah is similary noteworthy. He was a close relative of the Prophet and knew him and his background well since his boyhood. Waraqah was also conversant with the Christian scripture and the fact

1. *Bukhârî*, no. 3. See also *infra*, pp. 369-373.
2. 'Abul 'A'lâ Maudûdî, *Sîrat-i-Sarwar-i-'Âlam*, I., Lahore , 1978, Ch. II.

of divine revelation. With that knowledge he instantly came to the conclusion that the stranger who had appeared to Muḥammad (ﷺ) in the cave of Ḥirâ' could not be anyone but the angel who used to bring God's message to Mûsâ. Had the Prophet been ambitious and desirous of becoming a religious leader and had he been in the habit of receiving instructions in the teachings of Christianity from Waraqah, as is often alleged, the latter's reaction and attitude would have been quite different. He would have either informed Muḥammad (ﷺ) that he had obtained what he had so long been seeking or, likelier still, would have exposed his preparations and pretensions to the public. That Waraqah did neither of these is in itself an evidence that he neither imparted lessons in Christianity to Muḥammad (ﷺ) nor was aware of any ambition and preparation on his part to become a socio-religlous reformer. On the contrary, Waraqah's reaction clearly shows that by his study of the previous scriptures he had come to learn that the advent of a Prophet was foretold in them, that his advent was expected shortly and that Muḥammad (ﷺ) answered the scriptural descriptions of that awaited Prophet. It may further be pointed out that the orientalists, more particularly Watt, state that Waraqah's assurance gave Muḥammad (ﷺ) confidence in his mission.[1] This acknowledged lack of confidence on the Prophet's part at the very inception of his mission further belies the assumption of ambition and preparation on his part. To these may be added the well-known facts of his denial of any desire for material gains out of his mission and, more particularly, his turning down of the Quraysh leaders' repeated offers of wealth, leadership and power to him in lieu of his abandoning his mission.

Before ending this section it may be noted, however, that the Prophet did of course ultimately become the leader of his people and of the faithful in general. And because of this fact the orientalists seem to read back ambition and preparations on his part into his pre-prophetic life. But having strict regard to the facts and to the sources, and also keeping in view the historical norm that no leader emerges on the scene all of a sudden, the most that can be said is that the coming of the revelation to Muḥammad (ﷺ) and his call to prophethood was the beginning of that process which ultimately invested him with leadership; it was not the result of his ambition and preparation since his early life. At the time of his call to prophethood he was neither a potential leader nor was known to have aspired after leadership.

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, 50; *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 59.

II. THE ALLEGED CULTIVATION OF POETICAL SKILL

As an instance of his alleged ambition and preparation it has been alleged that since his early life the Prophet had taken care to develop his linguistic and poetical skill which he utilized in "composing" the Qur'ân. Thus W. Muir says that the spectacles of literary and poetical competitions at the 'Ukâẓ fair excited in Muḥammad (ﷺ) "a desire after personal distinction", as they also provided him with "rare opportunities of cultivating his genius, and learning from the great masters and most perfect models of the art of poetry and power of rhetoric."[1] And echoing Muir Margoliouth observes that Muḥammad (ﷺ) might have had some practice in eloquence "in which he afterwards excelled".[2] He further states that though the Prophet had some aversion to poetry, the "language of the Koran was thought by experts to bear a striking likeness" to early Arab poetry. Obviously alluding to the poetical competitions at 'Ukâẓ, to which Muir makes pointed reference in this connection, Margoliouth observes: "Of those lays which were recited on solemn or festive occasions some verses then stuck in his memory and provided the form of future revelations."[3]

It must at once be pointed out that the Qur'ân is not considered a book of poems by any knowledgeable person. Nor did the Prophet ever indulge in versifying. It was indeed an allegation of the unbelieving Quraysh at the initial stage of their opposition to the revelation that Muḥammad (ﷺ) had turned a poet; but soon enough they found their allegation beside the mark and, as will be seen shortly, changed their lines of criticism in view of the undeniable fact of the Prophet's being unlettered and completely unaccustomed to the art of poetry-making, saying that he had been tutored by others, that he had got the "old-world stories" written for him by others and read out to him in the morning and the evening.[4] This allegation also was squarely rebutted by the Qur'ân.

As regards the allegation of poetry-making or the Qur'ân being in any way a work of poems, it strongly denies the charge as follows:

﴿وما علمنٰه الشعر وما ينبغى له إن هو إلا ذكر وقرءان مبين﴾ (٣٦ : ٦٩)

"And We have not taught him (the Prophet) poetry, nor is it meet for him.

1. Muir, *Life of Mahomet*, 3rd edition, 15 (1st edn. II, 7).
2. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, 52-53.
3. *Ibid*, 60.
4. *Infra*, pp. 268-274.

This is naught but a citation, a Qur'ân, explicit." (36:69)

﴿وما هو بقول شاعر قليلا ما تؤمنون﴾ (٦٩ : ٤١)

"And it is not the saying of a poet. Little is it that you believe." (69:41)

In fact, quantitatively speaking, not even one fourth of the Qur'ân is what might be called *saj'* or rhymed prose. Margoliouth himself in effect contradicts his innuendo in two ways. He states at a subsequent stage in his work that Muḥammad (ﷺ) lacked eloquence and was not a ready debater so that he did not "try his chances" in what is called the "Council Chamber" of the Quraysh.[1] Secondly, while studiously shifting here the burden of opinion on the shoulder of "experts" in the subject Margoliouth himself holds a diametrically opposite view which he put forward subsequently in an independent study on the origins of Arabic poetry and in which he advanced the theory that the corpus of what is known as pre-Islamic poetry was a post-Islamic development modelled on the *saj'* of the Qur'ân.[2] This theory has naturally elicited a good deal of discussion,[3] but the very fact of his having advanced the theory constitutes a direct contradiction by himself of his earlier assertion that the pre-Islamic poetry "provided the form of future revelations."

III. THE QUESTION OF LITERACY: WATT'S THEORY

Though alleging that the Prophet cultivated his linguistic and poetic skill, both Muir and Margoliouth hold, in conformity with the sources, that he was an unlettered person. Margoliouth puts it categorically, saying that Muḥammad (ﷺ) "was not as a child taught to read and write, though these arts were known to many Meccans" and "their use in commerce was so great."[4] Interestingly enough, by pressing the two facts mentioned here by Margoliouth, namely, the prevalence of literacy among the Makkans and its use in commerce, Watt suggests that the Prophet was not altogether unlettered but knew some reading and writing. By citing a number of Qur'ânic statements and a few other facts showing that reading and writing were in vogue at Makka and that these skills were used for both commercial and religious purposes Watt states that in view of these facts "there is a presumption

1. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, 72.
2. *J.R.A.S.*, July 1925, 417-449.
3. Ṭâ Ha Ḥusayn wrote his work *Fî al-Sha'r al-Jâhilîyyah* on the basis of Margoliouth's theory. It elicited a good deal of discussion. See for a concise account Muḥammad Muṣṭafâ Hudara's essay in *Manâhij al-Mustashriqîn*, Pt.I., Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States, pp., 396-438.
4. Margoliouth, *Mohammed etc.*, 59.

that Muḥammad knew at least enough to keep commercial records."[1] Watt also cites in this connection parts of the Qur'ânic passage 29:48 and 25:5. These say, respectively, "You were not used to reading any book before it (the Qur'ân), nor to tracing it with your hand" and "Those were old-world fables he had them written down for him".[2] Watt interprets these two passages to say that the first passage means that "Muḥammad himself had not read any scriptures" previously, but that a man like Waraqah ibn Nawfal "or some of Muḥammad's alleged informants" had probably read the Bible in Syriac, no Arabic translation of it being available at that time. As to the second passage Watt says that it "can mean" that Muḥammad had the old-world stories written down for him "by secretaries". Thus arguing Watt concludes: "The probability is that Muḥammad was able to read and write sufficiently for business purposes, but it seems certain that he had not read any scriptures."[3]

Watt further discusses in this connection the meaning of the term *'ummiyy* occurring in the Qur'ân. Before dealing with that point, however, it would be worthwhile to discuss the above noted reasoning of Watt. It is well-known that some people at Makka at that time definitely knew reading and writing. It is also a recognized principle that when a certain situation or feature prevails *generally* in a given society or country, it gives rise to a presumption of such a situation or feature in respect of a particular individual of that society or country. But niether the sources at our disposal nor the instances cited by Watt create the impression that reading and writing was the order of the day at Makka on the eve of the Prophet's emergence, nor that such was the case with any sizeable portion of the then Makkan community, not to speak of a majority of them. Hence there is no case for a presumption of reading and writing in respect of the Prophet. On the contrary, the well-known circumstances of his early life give rise to a strong presumption that he had not any opportunity or chance for receiving a formal education during the formative years of his life.

Secondly, with regard to the two Qur'ânic passages, 29:48 and 25:5, Watt has quoted them both only partly, had taken them both out of their contexts and has put on them wrong and tendentious interpretations not supported by

1. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 52.
2. See below, text, for further discussion.
3. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 52.

their contexts nor by the tenor of any of the passages as a whole. To see how he has done so it is necessary to quote the passages in original and in full. The text of 29:48 is as follows:

﴿وما كنت تتلوا من قبله من كتـب ولا تخطه بيمينك إذا لارتاب المبطلون﴾ (٢٩ : ٤٨)

"And you were not used to reading/reciting any book before this, nor to writing it with your right hand. In that case the prattlers could have entertained doubts." (29:48) It is clear that the statement has been made in the context of the unbelievers' allegation that the Prophet had himself composed what he was giving out as revelation from Allah. The passage tersely exposes the absurdity of that allegation by simply pointing out the indisputable fact known to every Makkan at that time that the Prophet did not previously use to read and write anything so that it was quite unlikely on his part to have come forward all of a sudden with a remarkable literary production and give it out as Allah's revelation. The implication is all the more clear from the last clause of the statement which says: "in that case the prattlers could have entertained doubts." It is also noteworthy that the expression *ma kunta* (ما كنت) implies a state of being unused or unable to (read and write). Also the indefinite form in which the word *kitab* (من كتاب) has been used clearly means "any book", not the book (الكتاب), which is the form in which the Qur'ân invariably refers to the Bible.

In his translation of the passage Watt of course uses the expression "any book". He also notes in connection with his discussion that there are "many reasons for thinking" that the Prophet "had never read the Bible or any other book." But having said so he proceeds to restrict the meanning of the passage to the Prophet's not having read "any scriptures" and adds that though he "himself" did not read the Bible nor wrote it down, persons like Waraqah ibn Nawfal and some of the Prophet's "alleged informants" had read the Bible in Syriac. Neddless to say that such an interpretation is not sustained by the passage. Whether Waraqah or any other person had read the Bible in Syriac or in any other language is totally extraneous to the meaning and purport of the passage which speaks only about the Prophet's antecedent. Watt's interpretation is cleverly geared to sustain another assumption which will be discussed shortly, namely, that Muḥammad (ﷺ) obtained through others Biblical information and ideas which he embodied in the Qur'ân.

More preposterous, however, is Watt's interpretation of the passage 25:5. To realize this it is necessary to quote the passage along with its immedi-

ately preceding and following *'âyahs*. The text runs as follows:

﴿وقال الذين كفروا إن هذا إلا إفك افترىــه وأعانه عليه قوم آخرون فقد جاءو ظلما وزورا(٤) وقالوا أســطير الأولين اكتتبها فهى تملى عليه بكرة وأصيلا(٥) قل أنزله الذى يعلم السر فى السمــوٰت والأرض...﴾

"(4) And the unbelievers say: This (the revelation) is nothing but a lie which he (the Prophet) has forged and in which another group of people have assisted him. Thus they have come up with an unjust and false allegation. (5) And they say: (These are) tales of the ancients which he has caused to be written (for him); then these are read unto him morning and evening. (6) Say: The One Who knows the secret of the heavens and the earth has sent it down..." (25:4-6)

It is obvious that the statement in *'ayah* 5 is made in the context of the unbelievers' allegations and in continuation of their rebuttal as mentioned in *'âyah* 4. This *'âyah* mentions that the unbelievers used to say that the revelation was a lie and that its text had been fabricated by the Prophet with the assistance of a number of other people. It also condemns the allegation as a downright injustice and falsehood (ظلما and زورا). Continuing this rebuttal *'ayah* 5 mentions the unbelievars' other allegation that what was being presented as revelation was mere old-world stories the Prophet had got written for him and read unto him morning and evening. Significantly enough, here also the pith of the allegation was that the Prophet was assisted by others. This is also denied by pointing out that the One Who knows the secret of the heavens and the earth has sent down the revelation. The reference to the "One Who knows the secret of the heavens and the earth" made in this connection is just to the point. For, revelation is essentially an intimate affair between Allah and his Messenger and none else could be an eye-witness to this process. Indeed, in many places in the Qur'ân it is very rightly stated that Allah alone is the best witness between the Prophet and his detractors.

In dealing with this statement of 25:5 Watt of course recognizes that it was an allegation of the Prophet's pagan opponents that the revelations were "old-world stories" he had got written down for him; but Watt does not follow the meaning and implication of the statement as a whole. He sidetracks the fact of the denial of the allegation, which is the sole essence and spirit of the statement. Instead, he treats the allegation as an isolated statement and suggests that it "can mean" that the Prophet did not "himself" write down the text but had it written by "secretaties". Thus in effect Watt adopts the unbelievers' allegation and suggests that though the Prophet had the text of what

he gave out as revelation written by others, he, in reply to his opponents' allegation to the same effect, stated that he *himself* had not written it! Nothing could be a more stark disregard of the context and sequence of the text and a more absurd misinterpretation of it.

If Watt had been a little careful before advancing his interpretation he would have asked himself the vital question, which is the key to the whole situation, namely, why should the Prophet's opponents have made that type of allegation saying that he had obtained the help of others in composing the text of the revelation and had the old-world stories etc. written down for him by others? A moment's pause would have led to the unavoidable answer that they said so because they and everyone of their contemporaries knew full well that Muḥammad (ﷺ) was himself incapable of producing such a literary piece as he was giving out to them as "revelation". In fact they did not stop by saying only that the Prophet had the old-world stories written for him. They took care to mention also that he had those stories read or recited unto him in the morning and in the evening. The obvious implication is that they knew also that he could not do by simply having the stories etc. written for him; he needed them to be recited or read unto him for the purpose of mastering and memorizing them so that he could reproduce them before men. The omission of this very essential part of the *'âyah* regarding the unbelievers' allegation constitutes the second grave defect in Watt's treatment of it. He avoids mentioning it obviously because it would dismantle his contention. Thus by completely disregarding the context and tenor of the *'âyah*, by using only a fragment of it and by omitting its second part, which is vitally damaging to his interpretation, Watt attempts to make one of the strongest Qur'ânic statements showing the Prophet's "illiteracy" yield a contrary impression. Watt also does not seem to be aware of the implications of the assumption of mentors or secretaries for the Prophet, of which Margoliouth seems to be quite aware. If the Prophet had employed others to compose the text of the revelation for him, or, indeed if he had taken lessons from any one of his contemporaries, he would invariably have been exposed by those supposed mentors or secretaries, the more so because his claims to prophethood involved his leadership over the whole community including the latter too.

Having thus grossly misinterpreted the above mentioned Qur'ânic passages Watt concludes: "The probability is that Muḥammad was able to read

and write sufficiently for business purposes, but it seems certain that he had not read any scriptures." Watt further says that this conclusion "gives Muslim scholars all that is essential for apologetic purposes".[1] He then takes up the term *'ummiyy* occurring in the Qur'ân and says that though the Muslim scholars take it as implying "complete inability to read and write" it actually means "a people without a written scripture". He refers in this connection to the Qur'ânic passages 2:78, 3:20, 3:75 and 62:2, all of which he says convey the same meaning. Therefore, he concludes, the *'ummiyy* Prophet means the non-Jewish, gentile or unscriptured Prophet and that this means "that Muḥammad had no direct knowledge of the Bible."[2]

The innuendo in Watt's declaration that his conclusion gives Muslim scholars all that is essential for apologetic purposes may be overlooked; but it is essential to point out that Muslim scholars do not interpret the term *'ummiyy* only in the sense of an illiterate or uneducated person. Both classical and modern Muslim scholars clearly state that the term also conveys the sense of being "unscriptured" or "non-Jewish."[3] While accusing the Muslim scholars of having interpreted the term in only one sense, Watt himself in fact attempts to show that at all the places in the Qur'ân where the term occurs it yields only one and the same meaning of being non-Jewish or unscriptured.

Thus even with regard to 2:78, where such an interpretation is clearly inadmissible, because the whole description is about the Jews, he imposes that interpretation upon the expression and says that "careful reading of the verse shows that the reference is to the people without a written scripture".[4] That it is not at all so will be clear if we look to the *'âyah* and its context a little carefully. It runs as follows:

﴿ومنهم أميّون لا يعلمون الكتـــب إلا أمانيّ وإن هم إلا يظنون﴾ (٢ : ٧٨)

"And among them are *'ummiyyûn* who do not know the book except *'amâniyya*; and they do nothing but conjecture."(2:78) Watt gives a translation of the *'âyah* up to the expression *'illâ 'amâniyya* (إلا أماني) as:

1. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 52.
2. *Ibid.*, 53.
3. See Ibn Hishâm, II (ed. Tadmurî), p.220; also Râghib al-Isfahânî, (d. 502 H.) *Al-Mufradât Fî Gharîb al-Qur'ân*, 23; Al-Farrâ' (Abû Zakariya Yaḥyâ ibn Ziyâd, d. 207 H.), *Ma'ânî al-Qur'ân* Vol. I., Beirut, n.d., 224; Maudûdî, *Tafhîm al-Qur'ân*, English tr. *Towards Understanding the Qur'ân*, (tr. Z.I. Ansari) Vol. I., Leicester, 1988, pp. 87, 242, 265.
4. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 53.

"among them are *'ummiyyûn* who do not know the book except from hearsay" and adds that the rendering of *'illâ 'amâniyya* as "except from hearsay", which is Pickthall's, "is much disputed but hardly affects the argument." Also, citing Pickthall Watt says that *kitâb* should be translated as scripture.[1]

Watt is right in saying that Pickthall's rendering of the expression *'illâ 'amâniyya* "is much disputed". In fact it is simply wrong; for no standard lexicon or dictionary puts that meaning on it. Its generally accepted meaning is "desires", "whims" or words to the same effect. In fact if Watt had taken the trouble to refer to A. Yusuf Ali's translation, the first edition of which appeared in 1934, only four years after that of Pickthall's, he would have found that the expression has been translated there as "desires". Even A.J.Arberry gives its meaning as "fancies".[2] Watt seems to have chosen to use Pickthall's translation because it supports his intrepretation of *'ummiyyûn* here as people without a scripture.

But apart from the disputed meaning of *'âmâniyya*, the *'âyah* does in no way support the interpretation of *'ummiyyûn* given here by Watt. The whole context of the *'âyah* is a description of the conduct of the Jews of the time. Thus *'âyah* 76 speaks of their concealing important aspects of the revelation they themselves had received; while *'âyah* 77 states, by way of a warning to them: "Do they not know that Allah knows what they conceal and what they reveal?" Then comes *'âyah* 78, which is quoted above, starting with the expression: "And among them...", thus continuing the description; and the succeeding *'âyah* 79 refers to their practice of giving out their own compositions as revelations from God, thus elucidating one of the ways in which they used to indulge in their *'âmâniyya* (fancies) in respect of God's revelation. In fact the description and censure continue till *'âyah* 82. Obviously the *'âyah* 78 refers to the *'ummiyyûn* of the Jews, i.e. the uninformed and ignorant ones of them, not to any other group of people. If the reference was to the Arabs or unscriptured people in general, the expression *wa minhum* (ومنهم) "And among them" would be totally irrelevant and uncalled for; because the Arabs or other non-Jewish people there were all unscriptured.

Even keeping aside the context and taking the *'âyah* individually, it is impossible to reconcile Watt's interpretation with it. Thus employing the English equivalents suggested by Watt the translation of the *'âyah* would

1. *Ibid.*
2. A.J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted.* O.U.P. (Paperback), 10.

stand as: "Among them are unscriptured people who do not know the scripture (*al-kitâb*) except *'âmâniyya...*)". It is simply pointless to allege that an "unscriptured people" did not know the scripture! Such a statement, besides being nonsense, does not have the force of censure which is the unmistakable tenor of the *'âyah* in question. The oddity of the interpretation would be all the clearer if we take into consideration the last part of the *'âyah* which, characteristically enough, Watt does not mention. This last clause consists of five words — *wa in-hum 'illâ yaẓunnûna*-(وإن هم إلا يظنون) — "and they do nothing but conjecture". This clasue is just in continuation of the censure and in the nature of an elaboration of the term *'amâniyya* used previously in the *'âyah*. Hence this concluding clause of the *'âyah* also will have no force of censure and no purposeful sense if the expression, *'ummiyyûn* is taken to imply a people who have not received any scripture; for it is no fault in such a people that they should only conjecture about the contents of *the book*. Thus, whether considered in its context or in isolation the *'âyah* clearly means that "among them", that is among the Jews about whom the whole discussion is going on here, there are *'ummiyyûn*, that is those who are ignorant and do not take care to study their own scripture, who only follow the dictates of their fancies and indulge in conjectures. Not only that, they also give out their own compostitions as *the book* from God, as the succeeding *'âyah* 79 says. This latter statement also would be meaningless if the *'ummiyyûn* about whom it speaks is taken to mean a people without a scripture. For there was no question for such a people giving out something as *the book* to the people.

Watt thinks that the word *'ummiyy* is derived from the Hebrew phrase *ummot hâ 'olâm* (the peoples of the world of gentiles). Such might have been the case; but there is the more authoritative view that it is derived from the Arabic *'umm* (mother) and therefore, *'ummiyy* means one who has no acquired knowledge except what he received at his mother's cradle. In any case, it is fairly certain that the Jews used to refer to non-Jews as *'ummiyy* or unscriptured people. They did so derisively to imply that since the other people did not possess any revealed book they were devoid of knowledge and learning or, in other words, they were ignorant and illiterate. Thus even from the Jew's practice the word bore the meaning of illiterate or ignorant. It may be recalled in this connection that the ancient Greeks also used to refer to all non-Greek (non-Hellenic) people as 'barbarians'. This word also conveyed not simply the meaning of non-Greek but essentially that of a person beyond

the pale of civilization and culture. And it is this latter meaning that ultimately prevailed to the exclusion of the original meaning. Similarly the Arabs used to refer to a non-Arab as *'a'jam*, that is one who is unable to express himself fluently, the original meaning of *'Arab* being one who could express himself fluently. Subsequently the original meaning of *'a'jam* receded into the background and it came to imply simply a non-Arab or foreigner. Again, the ancient Hindus used to call a non-Aryan a *yavana*; but subsequently the word came to denote not simply a non-Aryan, but a non-Hindu, more particulary a Muslim. It is thus clear that such words had both original as well as acquired meanings and that for a period of transition those words bore both meanings. It appears that so far as the word *'ummiyy* is concerned, both its original and derived senses were in vogue when the Qur'ân was revealed. Hence we find it used in both the senses in the Qur'ân, the exact sense at each place to be determined by the context and tenor of the statement. This is in addition to the well-known fact that in every language there are many words each of which bears a number of different meanings depending on the context and the situation.

As shown above, the term *'ummiyy* has definitely been used in the sense of "unlettered" in 2:78. There are five other places where the term occurs in the Qur'ân. In three of these places, namely, 3:20, 3:75 and 62:2, the term occurs in the plural and accusative form and in each of these places it may be taken either in the sense of illiterate and uninformed people or in that of people without a scripture. At the other two places, namely, 7:157 and 7:158, it is used in its singular form and as a personal epithet of the Prophet. At each of these places it signifies an unletterd person and can in no way be taken to mean a person without a scripture or a non-Jewish individual. This would be evident if we simply look at the relevant parts of these two *'âyahs*. They run as follows:

﴿الذين يتبعون الرسول النبى الأمىّ الذى يجدونه مكتوبا عندهم فى التورىٰة والإنجيل... فالذين ءامنو به وعزّروه ونصروه واتبعوا النور الذى أنزل معه أولـٰئك هم المفلحون﴾ (٧: ١٥٧)

"Those who follow the Messenger, the *'ummiyy* (unlettered) Prophet, whom they find mentioned to them in the *Tawrâh* and the *Injîl*,... So those who believe in him, respect him and help him, and follow *the light* which is sent down with him, those are they who will succeed." (7:157).

﴿قل يأيها الناس إنى رسول الله إليكم جميعا... فـئامنوا بالله ورسوله النبىّ الأمىّ الذى يؤمن بالله وكلمـٰته واتبعوه لعلكم تهتدون﴾ (٧: ١٥٨)

"Say: O men, I am Allah's Messenger to you all... So believe in Allah and His Messenger, the *'ummiyy* (unlettered) Prophet who believes in Allah and His words. And follow him so that you may get guidance." (7:158).

Two points need to be specially noted about these two *'âyahs*. In the first place, while the burden of the first *'âyah* is that the Prophet was sent as Messenger of Allah to Jews as well as Christians "who find him mentioned to them in the *Tawrah* and the *Injîl*", the second *'âyah* states that he was sent to "all the people" of the world. This being the main burden of the two *'âyahs* it would be quite inappropriate to emphasize here his non-Jewish origin or Arab ethnic affiliation. In fact it would be simply self-defeating to say that a non-Jewish or unscriptured Prophet was sent to the Jews and Christians who had their scriptures. Rather, keeping in view the fact that it was the unbelievers' frequent allegation that what Muḥammad (ﷺ) was giving out was his own fabrication, and also the fact that the appeal was addressed to a wider audience, it is only natural that the case was put in the way best calculated to rebut that allegation. Secondly, both the *'âyahs* also say, implicitly as well as explicitly, that the Prophet had been endowed with a revealed book which he himself believes ﴿الذى يؤمن بالله وكلمـٰته﴾ and asked his audience to beleive in it ﴿واتبعوا النور الذى أنزل معه﴾. Thus at both the places the expression can only mean an unlettered or untutored Prophet, not at all an un-Jewish or unscriptured Prophet. For one thing, it would simply be antithetical to describe him as an "unscriptured" Prophet when he had already received a scripture (*kitâb*) and which he had been asking all the people — Makkans, Arabs, Jews, Christians and "all the people" of the world — to believe. The whole point at issue was whether the scripture he claimed to have received from Allah was to be believed or not; and in that situation he simply could not have said that he was an "unscrptured" Prophet.

Whatever meaning one may like to put on this term, it should once again be emphasized that this word is not the sole Qur'ânic evidence of the Prophet's being unlettered. As already noted,[1] there are a number of Qur'ânic statements, made mainly in reply to the various allegations of the unbelievers, that unmistakably show that the Prophet was unacquainted with the art of reading and writing and that this fact was so well known to his adversaries that they were forced to modify their lines of attack saying that he had got his texts written down and read unto him by others.

1. *Supra*, 241-246.

Before leaving this topic it would be worthwhile to mention that Watt opens his discussion by observing that the "main body of later Muslim opinion argued that the Qur'ân was all the greater miracle because Muḥammad could neither read nor write..."[1] It must at once be pointed out that Muslims hold that the Prophet was unlettered not because the "main body of later Muslim opinion" argued that for the sake of proving the miracle of the Qur'ân, but because the Qur'ân itself clearly proves him to be so and throws out a continuing challenge to anyone to come up with a single *sûrah* comparable to any of its long or short *sûrahs*. Watt's premise and the way in which he misconstrues the Qur'ânic statements in this regard only indicate that he is out to prove the reverse, namely, that the Prophet did know reading and writing and, by implication, the Qur'ân is not that much of a miracle. But after all his laboured interpretations and arguments he concludes that probably "Muḥammad was able to read and write sufficiently for besiness purposes." Obviously the question his conclusion suggests is: Was it likely or natural for anyone with such modest knowledge of the three Rs and without any prior literary effort of any sort till at least the fortieth year of his life to produce all of a sudden a text which constitutes acknowledgedly "the supreme classic" of Arabic literature?[2] Untortunately Watt has not asked himself the question, not to speak of attempting an answer to it.

Finally a word about the theme of preparation in general, to which this question of the Prophet's illiteracy is clearly related. A secular historian indeed finds it difficult to explain the emergence of a leader or in fact any development without taking into account the circumstances of the time and the background and preparation, direct and indirect, of the historical figure concerned. In a sense, however, the question is related to another basic problem of history, namely, whether history creates the individual or the individual creates history. Without entering into that issue it may only be emphasized that so far as Muḥammad (ﷺ) is concerned he is not simply and only a historical figure like any other historical personality. He is first and foremost a Prophet, a Messenger of God. This may be a matter of belief; but it is necessary not to ignore that belief. This being the case, any attempt

1. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 51.

2. The phrase is that used by the Oxford University Press in its notice to A.J. Arberry's translation of the Qur'ân in "the world classics" series, paperback edition, 1982 reprint, back cover.

to make an assessment of Muḥammad (ﷺ) only by the usual standard of historical investigation is apt more often than not to overlook or overshadow the extraordinary aspect of Prophethood. A proper appreciation of him calls for an awareness of this "extraordinary" in him notwithstanding his being a historical figure.

It is of course admitted that a non-Muslim is not conscientiously bound to believe that Muḥammad (ﷺ) was a Messenger of Allah; but when a professedly historical study is directed predominantly to show that he was not quite a Messenger of Allah, or to illustrate the "danger" posed by Islam to the 'Western civilzation", the work in effect degenerates into a polemic, perhaps in spite of the intention of its author to the contrary. Watt indeed signifies that intention. Writing as a "professing" Christian he states at the outset of his *Muhammad at Mecca* that "in so far as Christianity is in contact with Islam Christians must adopt an attitude towards Muḥammad and that attitude ought to be based on theological principles"; but he (Watt) has attempted to "preserve neutrality" on the theological questions and has addressed his work "first and foremost to the historian." At the same time he claims that his work "presents Christians with the historical material which must be taken into account in forming the theological judgement" on Islam.[1] The professed intention to preserve neutrality on theological questions does not appear to have always succeeded in the work; and this appears to have been due mainly to the declared objective of providing materials for the Christians' theological judgement on Islam. The two purposes have obviously been at loggerheads throughout his treatment of the various aspects of the Prophet's life. The historian has suffered at the altar of the evangelist.

The need to recoginze the "extraordinary" in Muḥammad (ﷺ) does not mean that his life should not be the subject of critical and historical study. It only underscores the absolute need to be scrupulously just to the sources by not attempting to distort or misinterpret their texts and by not taking them out of their contexts. It also means that any unfavourable or adverse assumption should be avoided unless it is suggested by the clearest of evidence. The presumption should be that of "not guilty" unless proved otherwise, not that of "guilty" unless shown to the contrary.

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, Introduction, x.

Chabter XI

THE THEME OF JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE

A good deal has been written on the theme of the Prophet's having allegedly drawn heavily on Judaism and Christianity in formulating his doctrines and teachings. The aim of these writings has invariably been to show, on the one hand, his preparations for the role he played and, on the other, to disprove the divine origin of the Qur'ân. Except for Abraham Gieger,[1] who concentrated on the supposed Jewish influence only, William Muir was perhaps the first modern scholar to advance the theory as a whole and did most to popularize it. Since his writings a number of works have appeared on the subject.[2] The sheer volume of these writings calls for an idependent treatment of it. The scope of the present work, however, allows only an epitomization and discussion of the main assumptions of Muir, Margoliouth and Watt.

I. SUMMARY OF THE ASSUMPTIONS

Muir says that Muḥammad (ﷺ) obtained his knowledge of Judaism and Christianity through his contact with the followers of those religions in Makka, Madina and the 'Ukâẓ fair, as well as in the course of his trade journeys to Syria. Even as a child he is said to have seen the Jews at Madina, "heard of their synagogue and worship, and learned to respect them as men that feared God."[3] Muir of course rejects as "puerile" the story of a meeting between Nestorius and the Prophet during his second journey to Syria leading Khadîjah's (r.a.) trade caravan to that place. Yet, says Muir, "we may be certain that Mahomet lost no opportunity of enquiring into the practices and tenets of the Syrian Christians or of conversing with the monks and clergy

1. Abraham Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthem aufgenommen*? Bonn, 1833.

2. Of such works mention may be made of (a) Wilhelm Rudolph, *Dei Abhängigkeit des Qorans von Judentum und Die Christentunm*, Stuttgart, 1922; (b) Tor Andrae, *Der Ursprung des Islams und des Christentum*, Stockholm, 1926 (Fr. tr. *Les Origins de l'Islam le Christianisme*, Paris, 1955); (c) R. Bell, *The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment*, London, 1926; (d) K. Ahrens, "Christliches in Qoran", *ZDMG*, 1930, 15-68, 148-190 (also his *Muhammed als Religionsstiffer*, Leipzig, 1935; (e) C.C. Torrey, *The Jewish foundation of Islam*, New York, 1933 (republished, New York, 1967) and (f) A.I. Katsh, *Judaism in Islam*. New York, 1954.

3. Muir, *op. cit*, third edition, 15 (Vol. II, 1st edn, 8).

who fell in his way."[1] As specific instances of such contacts, however, Muir mentions only three, namely, (a) the Prophet's having heard as a boy the preaching of Quss ibn Sâ'ida at the 'Ukâẓ fair,[2] (b) the contact with Zayd ibn Ḥârithah whose ancestors, Muir supposes, had been exposed to the influence of Christianity and who, though sold as slave when a little boy, must have communicated whatever impressions he had of Christianity to Muḥammad (ﷺ);[3] and (c) the contact with Waraqah ibn Nawfal who, as Muir puts it, "had an acknowledged share in satisfying the mind of Mahomet that his mission was divine."[4] Muir further says that Muḥammad (ﷺ) must have noticed the differences and conflicts among the Christians and the Jews but nonetheless he obtained from them the idea of One True God, of divine revelation, of a Book and of a name, that of Abraham, which both Jews and Christians repeated with profound veneration and who was "the builder of the Ka'aba and author of the rites observed there by every Arab tribe." Muir also says that while in Syria the Prophet must have observed what is called "the national profession of Christianity" there. As a result of all these, concludes Muir, Muḥammad (ﷺ) thought of acting the part of a Christian bishop, "but on a still wider and more catholic scale."[5]

Thus suggesting the Prophet's contact with Judalism and Christianity, more particularly with the latter, Muir adds that since he (the Prophet) derived his information from the "orthodox party", the "ecclesiastics and monks of Syria", he obtained a "distorted" and faulty view of Christianity, particularly with regard to Mary and Jesus.[6] Had he been given a correct view, observes Muir, he would have become a Christian instead of founding a new religion. Muir therefore laments that "the misnamed catholicism of the Empire thus grievously misled the master mind of the age, and through him eventually so great a part of the eastern world."[7]

The views thus advanced by Muir were taken over and repeated by Margoliouth in his own way. As pointed out earlier, Margoliouth assumes large-scale trading activities on the Prophet's part. In the course of such

1. *Ibid.*, 20 (Vol. II, 1st edn., 18).
2. *Ibid.*, 15-16 (Vol. II, 1st edn., 7-8).
3. *Ibid.*, 34 (Vol. II, 1st edn., 49-50).
4. *Ibid.* (Vol. II., 1st edn., 52).
5. *Ibid.*, 16 (Vol. II, 1st edn., 8-9).
6. *Ibid.*, 20-21 (Vol. II, 1st edn. 19-20).
7. *Ibid.*

activities he is said to have picked up information, most of it, as Margoliouth puts it, from "conversations (e.g.) at wine-shop or from listening to story-tellers" among whom were "Jewish dealers who traded in clothes."[1] From such intercourse with the Arabian Jews and Christians the Prophet is said to have "derived a sort of biblical phraseology".[2] Also, he is said to have been so engrossed in business that "traces of this calling are found all over his Sacred Book."[3] Like Muir, Margoliouth also says that Muḥammad (ﷺ) got the idea of a Prophet, of divine revelation, of a Book, etc., from the Jews and Christians. Like Muir, again, Margoliouth states that the Prophet's knowledge about these two systems was faulty and "superficial".[4] Margoliouth adds, however, that as time went on the Prophet's knowledge about the biblical stories improved. There "is no question,", writes Margoliouth, "that as the Koran grew in bulk, its knowledge of biblical stories became somewhat more accurate: and though this greater degree of accuracy may have at times been due to the Prophet's memory, it is more likely that he took such opportunities as offered of acquiring more information."[5]

But while Muir laments that a "distorted" view of Christianity prevented Muḥammad's (ﷺ) ultimate conversion to that system, Margoliouth seeks to explain that outcome in terms of the Prophet's design and personal ambition. The part which the Prophet played, says Margoliouth, was "present to his mind for many years, suggested by conversations with Jews and Christians and Parsees", all of whom had "one thing which the Arabs had not: a legislator, who had acted as divine commissioner... Yet each nation ought to have a leader. Here then was an opportunity for a Prophet."[6]

Echoing Muir's statement that the Prophet observed and was impressed by the "national profession of Christianity" in Syria Margoliouth says that when he (the Prophet) visited countries where "the whole population was subjected to the law of God" he was convinced of the backwardness of his own country and of the need for reform which he decided to carry out by assuming the role of a Prophet and by means of a revelation which he saw as

1. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, 60.

2. *Ibid.*, 58-59.

3. *Ibid.*, 69. Here Margoliouth refers to C.C. Torrey's *Commercial-Theological Terms in the Koran*, Leiden, 1892, without specifying the author and title of the work.

4. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, 76-77.

5. *Ibid.*, 106.

6. *Ibid.*, 73.

"an indispensable preliminary of progress."[1] He did not think of embracing either Judaism or Christianity because, according to Margoliouth, Christianity "could not be dissociated from subjection to the suzerainty of Byzantium and Moḥammed was far too great a patriot to contemplate the introduction of a foreign yoke." Also, even if converted to "an established religion, he could not have pretended to such knowledge of it as older members possessed."[2] Hence he decided to reproduce the role of Moses or Jesus. "Being a cool-headed student of human nature", further states Margoliouth, Muḥammad (ﷺ) could see that "they were men, and what they had done he could do."[3] His plans are said to have been facilitated by the prevailing differences between the Jews and the Christians and between the latter's rival sects, and at Madina he "claimed that it was his mission to put them right where they disagreed."[4]

These Muir-Margoliouth assumptions have been adopted and developed by Watt. Thus he deals rather elaborately with what he calls the "relation of Islamic teachings to Judaeo-Christian sources" and states that "one of the theses" of his book, *Muhammad at Macca*, is that the greatness of Islam is largely due to a "fusion" of some Arab elements "with certain Judaeo-Christian conceptions."[5] He sets the theme on a wider plane and speaks about the influence of these "sources" upon the then Arabs in general, or rather on Muḥammad's (ﷺ) environment, as well as upon him individually.[6] Like his predecessors Watt holds that the concept of monotheism was derived mainly from Christianity and Judaism. Though not excluding the possibility of influence from the monotheistic groups like the *ḥanîfs* he discounts any "movement" as such towards monotheism[7] and asserts that the "premonitions of monotheism among the Arabs must have been due mainly to Christian and Jewish influences."[8] Like Muir and Margoliouth, again, Watt traces these influences through the Arabs' contact with the Jews and Christians in Arabia and with the Byzantine Empire, which was Christian and "whose power and civilization they greatly admired", and also with

1. *Ibid.*, 74.
2. *Ibid.*, 77.
3. *Ibid.*, 78.
4. *Ibid.*, 76-77.
5. Watt, *M. at M.*, 23.
6. *Ibid.*, 25-29 and Excursus B, pp. 158-161; and *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 36-38.
7. *M. at. M.*, 28; *Muḥammad's* Mecca, 37-38.
8. *M at M.*, 27.

Abyssinia and even Ḥîrah, which "was an outpost of the East Syrian or Nestorian Church."[1] Watt also repeats the Muir-Margoliouth assumption that the idea of prophethood was derived from Judaism and Christianity. The "idea that Hûd and Ṣâliḥ were prophets to ʻÂd and Thamûd", writes Watt, "was probably a pre-Quranic instance of the application of the Judaeo-Christian conception of prophethood."[2]

Having thus spoken of the "indirect environmental influence" Watt comes to the question of "direct" influence and says that there is "good evidence" showing that the Prophet had a "monotheist informant."[3] This "good evidence" he seeks in the Qur'ânic statement, 16:103, which, it may be mentioned here, is cited also by Margoliouth to suggest that the Prophet had an informant.[4] This passage gives a lie to the unbelievers' allegation to the same effect by pointing out that the person they hinted at spoke a foreign tongue, but the Qur'ân is in clear Arabic.[5] Watt does not, however, cite Margoliouth. Instead, he adopts C.C. Torrey's peculiar interpretation of the passage[6] saying that it shows that the Prophet did not deny having a human teacher but only insisted that the teaching came from heaven[7]

Proceeding on the basis of that assumption Watt next develops in effect what Margoliouth says about the supposed growth in accuracy in the Prophet's knowledge of Biblical stories with the passage of time. Watt cites some seven Qur'ânic passages, which we shall presently notice, to show what he calls the "growth in accuracy of the acquaintance with Old Testament stories, particularly with regard to Abraham and Lot."[8] He adds that "there are a great many"of such examples of growth in accuracy, without of course citing them, and says that in view of these it is difficult for "the Western critic" to resist the conclusion that the Prophet's "knowledge of these stories was growing and that therefore he was getting information from a person or persons familiar with them."[9] In this connection Watt futher refers to the Qur'ânic passage 11:51 which says that neither the Prophet nor his peo-

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ibid.*, 28.
3. *Ibid.*, 27 and Excursus B, p. 159.
4. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, 106-107.
5. The passage is: ﴿ ولقد نعلم أنهم يقولون إنما يعلمه بشر لسان الذى يلحدون إليه أعجمىّ وهذا لسان عربىّ مبين ﴾
6. C.C. Torrey, *The Jewish Foundation of Islam*, *op. cit.*, 43 f.
7. Watt, *M. at M.*, Excursus B., p. 159.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*

ple previously knew the stories of the prophets revealed to him. Watt says that the "embarrassment caused by such a verse to those who want to uphold the sincerity of Muḥammad" (ﷺ) could be resolved by supposing that he did not make any distinction between the "story" and the "teaching" implicit in it and by interpreting the term *nûḥî* (We reveal) occurring in the passage to mean we "cause to understand the teaching implicit in it or the significance of" etc.[1]

Reiterating the same views in his latest work and further citing the Qur'ânic statement in 25:4 Watt states that there might have been more than one informant for Muḥammad (ﷺ) and that the Qur'ân "does not deny that Muḥammad was receiving information in this way" but that it merely insists that the material thus received "could not have been Qur'ân, since a foreigner could not express himself in clear Arabic." Watt thus once again states that what the Prophet received from his informants "would be factual knowledge" but the "meaning and iterpretation of the facts" came to him "by the ususal process of revelation."[2]

Thus dealing with the topic of borrowing from Judaism and Christianity, Watt also recapitulates and expands the Muir-Margoliouth assumption that the Prophet had obtained certain distorted and mistaken notions of these two religions and those notions were reproduced in the Qur'ân. Avoiding Muir's insinuation against the "orthodox party" and the Syrian Church Watt says that "the particular Jewish and Christian groups which influenced the Arabs" had "many strange ideas". Examples of such strange notions, asserts Watt, are the Qur'ânic statement which "suggests that the Trinity consists of Father, Son and Mary". This statement, emphasizes Watt, "is doubtless a criticism of some nominally Christian Arabs who held this view". Watt further states that "much of the detail" from the Jewsih side also was incorporated in the Qur'ân, but this came "not from the sacred scripture but from secondary sources of various types".[3]

The same thing he repeats in his latest work saying that "some people in Mecca wrongly supposed certain beliefs to be held by Jews and Christians", namely, "that Christians took Jesus and Mary to be two gods apart from God, and that the Jews held 'Uzayr [Ezra] to be the son of God."[4] These

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 45.
3. *M. at M.*, 27-28.
4. *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 2, 45.

Qur'ânic statements, asserts Watt, "are palpably false" because "these were beliefs held by the Meccans" and bceause, according to him, "it was not essential for God's purpose that false ideas of this sort should be corrected", for He addressed the Arabs "in terms of their existing beliefs" and that the Qur'ânic message could be communicated without correcting these beliefs."[1] Elaborating the same assumption Watt states that the Qur'ân addresses the Arabs in the first instance, speaking "in terms of their world picture", including even points in which that picture was "mistaken". As support for this statement he refers to the prevailing notion of the earth being a flat space and quotes some seven Qur'ânic passages to show that that mistaken notion was reproduced in the Qur'ân.[2]

Again, like Muir and Margoliouth, more particularly the latter, Watt states that Muḥammad (ﷺ), having observed the unsatisfactory social condition of his land and people, and having been convinced of the need for bringing about a reformation, thought that this could be done by means of a revelation or religion. As Watt puts it, Muḥammad (ﷺ) "may even have decided that this [the unsatisfactory state] could be got rid of by some form of religious belief."[3] Again, echoing Margoliouth in a remarkable way, Watt further suggests, though in a guarded way, that Muḥammad (ﷺ) launched a new monotheistic movement in order to avoid the political implications of adopting Judaism or Christianity — "for Christianity was linked with the Byzantine and the Abyssinian empires, and Judaism had support in the persian empire. In effect Islam gave the Arabs a monotheism independent of the empires."[4] Watt winds up his discussion by adopting in effect Bell's observation that for "the study of the life of Muḥammad it is hardly necessary" to delineate the relative importance of Jewish and Christian influences; for, he admits, "many details are disputed". "The main necessity", he emphasizes, "is to realize that such things were 'in the air' before the Qur'ân came to Muḥammad and were part of the preparation of himself and of his environment for his mission."[5]

Thus do all three of our scholars advance almost identical views with

1. *Ibid.*, 2, 44.

2. *Ibid.*, 2, 5-7. The Qur'ânic passages quoted are: 2:22; 13:3; 20:53; 51:47-48; 71:19-20; 78:6-7 and 79:27-33. See *infra,* pp. 301-319, for discussion on these passages.

3. *Ibid.*, 51.

4. *Ibid.*, 38.

5. *M. at M.*, 29.

similar arguments. In general these arguments revolve round the following five assumptions:

(1) The circumstantial or environmental influence of Judaism and Christianity;

(2) The alleged specific instances of Muḥammad's contact with particular Christian individuals;

(3) The supposed Qur'ânic evidence about his informant or informants;

(4) The supposed gradual growth in accuracy in the Qur'ân's narration of the biblical stories; and

(5) The alleged reproduction of contemporary errors in the Qur'ân.

The following is a discussion of the first four categories of arguments. The fifth, the alleged errors in the Qur'ân, is dealt with separately in the next chapter.

II. ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCE IN GENERAL

It is an acknowledged fact that there were Jews and Christians in Arabia; the former mainly at Yathrib (Madina) and the latter mainly at Najran. So far as Makka, the birth-place of the Prophet and the immediate scene of his activities was concerned, there were only a few Christians of humble social and intellectual status, being either slaves or petty retailers, and mostly immigrants. One or two original inhabitants of Makka like 'Uthmân ibn al-Ḥuwayrith and Waraqah ibn Nawfal had turned Christians, the former out of personal or political considerations, and the latter as a result of his search for a better faith. Also the Makkans conducted trading operations with such countries as Syria and Abyssinia where Christianity prevailed. It is therefore quite understandable that the knowledgeable section of the Makkan community including Muḥammad (ﷺ) had been aware of both Judaism and Christianity as systems of religion and did doubtless also know something of the common beliefs and practices of the votaries of those religions. Indeed all the three of our scholars, Muir, Margoliouth and Watt, are at one in stating, after all their arguments, that Muḥammad's (ﷺ) knowledge of Judaism and Christianity was at best second-hand, "superficial" and erroneous. Margoliouth even states that one reason why Muḥammad (ﷺ) did not embrace either of these religions was that he realized he could not pretend to such knowledge of it as its older members possessed. Now, this being obviously the most that the orientalists think was the level of Muḥammad's (ﷺ)

supposedly acquired knowledge of the two religions, the question that naturally suggests itself to the general reader is: Is it reasonable to assume that a person of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) intelligence and common sense, as on all hands he is admitted to be, would proceed to propound a new religion and challenge the correcteness of both the prevailing systems of Judaism and Christianity on the basis of a mere hearsay and superficial knowledge of them? The orientalists, although they spare no pains to prove ambition and preparations on the Prophet's part to play the role he did, would just not address themselves to this simple and natural question. The inherent weakness and inconsistency in the orientalists' approach lies in the fact they suggest on the one hand that the Prophet was ambitious and therefore careful enough to avoid the political implications of embracing either Judaism or Christianity and, on the other, that he was careless enough to proceed to found a new religion by picking up information from bazaar gossips and Jewish story-tellers at wine shops!

The fact is that it is as naive to say that Islam is an amalgam of second-hand information about Judaism and Christianity with some Arab elements, as it is absurd to suggest that the Prophet was not cognizant of the two religious systems. There is no doubt that the concepts of prophethood, revelation and of Allah as Supreme Lord were known to the pre-Islamic Arabs. The existence of these concepts does not, however, *ipso facto* prove that they were derived from the Christians and the Jews, though the latter undoubtedly possessed these concepts as well. In so far as the concept of prophethood is concerned, the memory of Ibrâhim as Prophet and founder of the Ka'ba which the Arabs universally cherished, and the Abrahamic rites like *ḥajj* or pilgrimage to the Ka'ba were unquestionably pre-Jewish and pre-Christian. Similarly the concept of Allah as Supreme Lord was known to the pre-Islamic Arabs independently of any Jewish or Christian influence. The concept was in fact a remnant of the teachings of Ibrâhîm which had spread in Arabia before the coming into existence of either Judaism or Christianity. So was the concept of *ḥanîf* as a worshipper of one God, which also finds mention in the Qur'ân.[1] The orientalists of course recognize the existence of the concept of Allah among the Pre-Islamic Arabs; and of late Watt pays special attention to this point.[2] But while quoting a number of

1. See *infra*, ch. XIV for a discussion of the orientalists' views about the *ḥanifs*.
2. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 31-36.

well-known Qur'ânic passages that clearly show the existence of this concept of Allah among the pre-Islamic Arabs, and while quoting Teixidor's study of the inscriptions to show that belief in a high or supreme God was common throughout the Semitic Near East in the Greco-Roman period,[1] and thus trying to illustrate the Prophet's indebtedness to the prevailing ideas, Watt is very careful in not tracing this concept of a "high God" in any way to the so-called Judaeo-Christian influence. Nor does he explain how this particular concept came into existence and continued to survive among the polytheistic Arabs. He of course suggests, like Margoliouth, that the "archaic" religion or paganism was in the decline because, according to him, of a growing awareness of the powerlessness of the gods and goddesses.[2] Also, following others, he attempts to expalin the composition of the word Allah.[3] Yet, neither this nor the supposed decline in paganism does in itself explain the emergence of the concept of Allah as "high God".

As regards the concept of monotheism the Qur'ân, and for that matter the Prophet, accused the contemporary Arabs, Jews and Christians of having deviated from the original teachings of their prophets and of having degenerated into polytheism. There is thus no question of his having taken over the concept of monotheism from the Jews and the Christians, because he so unequivocally controverted and rejected what they said to be the teachings of their scriptures. In fact even a cursory glance at the Qur'ân unmistakably brings out two undeniable facts. In the first place, the Qur'ân does not claim any originality in the sense of presenting a new religion. It claims merely to revive and fulfil the same message which it maintains — and here is its originality — God has given to all the Prophets throughout the ages and to every people. More specifically it claims its teachings to be the same as those of Abraham, Moses and Jesus, about all of whom it speaks in glowing terms. Sceondly, it very uncompromisingly rejects and denounces the polytheistic beliefs and practices of the contemporary Arabs as also of the Jews and Christians. This two-fold and predominant notes of the Qur'ân are just the reverse of what the orientalists suggest. They are emphatic in saying that Muḥammad (ﷺ) had no first-hand knowledge of their scriptures. He had neither read them himself, nor was any Arabic version of them available at

1. *Ibid.*, 35., quoting Javier Teixidor, *The Pagan God: Popular Religion in the Greco-Roman Period*, Princeton, 1977, pp. 17, 161.

2. Watt, *M. at M.*, 23-24; *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 35. See also Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, 24.

3. Watt, *M. at M.*, 26-27. See also Hitti, *op. cit.*, 100-101.

the time. The Qur'ân, and for that matter the Prophet are, on the other hand, equally emphatic in saying that their teachings are essentially the same as those of the original scriptures of the Jews and the Christians. Secondly, the orientalists insist that Muḥammad (ﷺ) derived his knowledge from those of his contemporary Jews and Christians whom he happened to meet. The Qur'ân, and therefore the Prophet, insist that the contemporary Jews and Christians were mistaken and misguided and had deviated from the teachings of their original scriptures, particularly in respect of montheism.

The only conclusion which any reasonable and impartial observer can draw from this situation is that Muḥammad (ﷺ) did not make up his teachings by picking up information from here and there; for in that case he would have feigned originality, would not have traced his teachings to the previous scriptures or would at least have so chosen his audience as were not likely to detect the sources of his information. Secondly, he had not also taken his information from his contemporaries because he openly found fault with them and set about to reform them and to bring them back to the original teachings of the previous prophets. Thirdly, since, while saying that his teachings were the same as those of the previous scriptures, he at the same time stated that he had not read any of them, and since the orientalists also agree that he had not read any of those scriptures, his source of knowledge must have been something else than either a first-hand perusal of those scriptures or a second-hand knowledge of them obtained from his contemporaries.

Some of the orientalists, particularly Watt, of course suggest a third possibility, that of there being a monotheist informant or informants for the Prophet. This assumption, as already indicated, raises more questions than it solves. The so-called Qur'ânic evidence on which this assumption is based will be examined presently. It may only be noted here that the Qur'ân, far from indicating that the Prophet had any human informant, does just the opposite thing of denying such allegeation by the unbelievers.

It has also been suggested, particularly by Margoliouth, that the Prophet, having got the name of Ibrâhîm from the Jews and Christians, traced his teachings to him in order to claim precedence over both Judaism and Christianity. Further, it has been said that the Prophet's denunciation of the Jews and Christians began after his break with the former at Madina. These two suggestions are manifestly untenable. The Abrahamic tradition, the Ka'ba and the rites connected with them existed there for ages before the

Prophet's brith. If he had invented the tradition and thus related his teachings to Ibrâhîm, he (the Prophet) would have been simply ridiculed not only by his adversaries but also by his followers. Secondly, the rejection of the Biblical teachings about the sonship or fathership of God and the assertion that both the Jews and the Christians had deviated from the teachings of their original scriptures had been very distinctly made in the Makkan *sûrahs* of the Qur'ân long before the migration to Madina and the subsequent development of enmity with the Jews of that place.

The truth is that it was impossible to get an impression of monotheism by any amount of observation of and acquaintance with the Judaism and Christianity of the day. Even a perusal of the extant scriptures would have hardly conveyed such an impression. The God in the Old Testament is depicted essentially as a tribal or racial god, openly partial to the children of Israel. Such a God could scarcely attract the imagination, far less the adoration, of a non-Israelite population. The text of the New Testament, on the other hand, obscured and blurred the concept of One God by inextricably tying it with the manifestly difficult and admittedly mysterious doctrine of the Trinity which conceives God not in easily understandable Unity but in "God the Father", "God the son" and "God the Holy Ghost", these three being not disinct qualities of a single entity but three separate entities. Moreover, the doctrine of incarnation on which the concept of "God the son" rests is essentially no different from the same doctrine of the Hindus. Like the Christian, a modern Hindu, while acknowledging the existence of many gods and goddesses and a sort of Trinity in the coexistence of Brahma, Vishnu and Śiva, would equally assiduously assert that his sacred texts do in the ultimate analysis speak of One and Only True God,[1] though a nȯn-Hindu finds it difficult to accept that Hinduism inculcates monotheism. And so far as the practices of the Jews and Christians of the time were concerned, they were acknowledgedly steeped in the most debasing corruptions and superstitions and were thus the farthest removed from being model monotheists. Muir indirectly admits this fact when he squarely decries what he calls the "misnamed catholicism" of the Empire and the "orthodox party" of the Syrian church. The situation indeed continued to deteriorate for several centuries after the emergence of Islam. In fact the various reform movements in

1. See for instance the modern Vedantists' views, particularly the views expressed by Dvendranath Thakur and his associates in the mid-nineteenth century, M.M. Ali, *The Bengali Reaction to Christian Missionary Activities, 1833-1857*, Chittagong, 1965, chaps. II and III.

Christianity, particularly the Cluniac Movement, the Iconoclastic Movement and the Reformation started by Martin Luther bear an eloquent testimony to the depth of degradation into which the Chrisians and Christianity of the day had descended. In a way, all these reform movements and the subsequent emphasis on monothesism, in spite of an adherence to the doctrines of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ, are by and large an impact of the uncompromising monotheism enunciated and propagated by Islam. In any case, so far as the state of Christianity in the 7th-8th century Syria and the neighbouring lands was concerned, it was more likely to repel than to attract any outside observer. Truly has it been said that the "self-conceit" which deludes one to assume that the spectacle of "national" profession of Christianity in Syria impressed the "young reformer" (Muḥammad, ﷺ) has no foundation in historical fact.[1]

III. THE ALLEGED INSTANCES OF CONTACT WITH JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN EXPERTS

The orientalists emphasize the well-known facts of the Prophet's two journeys to Syria, once in company with his uncle when about twelve years of age, and again as leader of Khadîjah's (r.a.) caravan when about twenty-five years of age. On both these occasions he is said to have come across a Christian monk, Baḥîra on the first occasion and Nestorius on the second. As already pointed out, doubts and improbabilities surround these traditions and the orientalists themselves, particularly Muir, reject the stories as "puerile". Nevertheless he assumes that Muḥammad (ﷺ) "lost no opportunity of enquiring into the practices and tenets of the Syrian Christians or conversing with the monks and clergy who fell in his way." The same assumption is made in a more exaggerated way by Margoliouth; while Watt also subscribes to the view by saying: Muḥammad had presumably some contact with Christians on his trading journeys to Syria."[2]

It must be emphasized that the trade journeys were made to a predominantly or wholly Christian land. There is thus no question of not making any contact with Christians. What is necessary to note is that there is no reference whatsoever in the sources to the Prophet's having taken advantage of those journeys to seek information about Christianity from any par-

1. Huart, "Une nouvelle Source du Koran", *Jurnal Asiatique*, 1904, p. 129. See also Goerges Sale. *Observations Historiques et Critiques sur le Mahometisme*, pp. 68-71.

2. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 36.

ticular monk or any individual Christian. Even the doubtful accounts of meetings with Baḥîra and Nestorius speak only of the enquiries and opinions of those two individuals, and not at all of the Prophet himself. Also, on the occacsion of the reported meeting with Baḥîra the Prophet was a mere boy of twelve and therefore unlikely to engage in any serious academic discussion. Nor could the nature of the journeys afford him any leisure to seek diversion in such educational exercises. If he had made any such educational contact, it would not have remained unnoticed by the scores of others of the leading men of Makka who had accompanied him on both the occasions and many of whom subsequently opposed his mission. Yet, we find from the Qur'ân that the unbelieving Quraysh leaders accused the Prophet of having allegedly received instructions only from a foreigner who happened to be in Makka and further alleged that a group of other people, also presumably in the city, composed the text of the revelation for him and read it unto him morning and evening. Had Muḥammad (ﷺ) contacted during his trade journeys to Syria any Christian monk or layman for obtaining information or even for casual discussion, the Quraysh opponents, many of whom had accompanied him to Syria, would not have failed to make the most of it in their attack against him. That no such allegation was made by them is a decisive proof that he had not sought information about Christianity or Judaism from anyone in the course of his journeys to Syria.

The second so-called instance is the tradition relating to Quss ibn Sâ'ida to which Muir refers specifically and Margoliouth alludes indirectly. It is stated that the Prophet heard Quss preach at the 'Ukâẓ fair.[1] This tradition is unanimously classified as spurious and is rejected as such.[2] Specially, one of its narrators, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥallâj al-Lakhmî, is condemned as a confirmed liar (*kadhdhâb*).[3] And even according to this spurious report, the

1. The tradition is recorded in a number of works. See for instance 'Abû al-Qâsim Sulaymân ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭabarânî, *Al-Mu'jam al-Kabîr* (ed. 'Abd al-Majîd al-Salafî), Vol. XII, 88-89; Nûr al-Din al-Hythamî, *Majma' al-Zawâ'id wa Manba' al-Fawâ'id*, Vol. IX, Beirut, 1986 / 1406, pp. 421-422; Al-Bayhaqî, *Dalâ'il al-Nubuwwah*, Vol. I., 453, 454-456 and 457-465.

2. See for instance 'Abû al-Faraj ibn al-Jawzî, *Al-Mawḍû'ât*, Vol. I, 213-214; Al-Suyûṭî, *Al-La'âli al-Maṣnû'ah*, Vol. I., 183-192; 'Abû al-Ḥasan 'Alî ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Iraq al-Kanânî (907-963), *Tanzîh al-Sharî'ah al-Marfû'ah 'an al-'Aḥâdîth al-Shanî'ah al-Mawḍû'ah*, Vol. I., 3rd impression, Beirut, 1981, pp. 241-243.

3. See for instance Al-Dhahabî, *Mîzân al-'I'tidâl Fî Naqd al-Rijâl* (ed. 'Ali Muḥammad al-Bejjawî), Vol. III, No. 7351, p. 509; *Al-'Iṣâbah*, Vol. III., pp. 279-280 (no. 7349).

Prophet was only one of the audience and did not make any enquiries as such with the speaker. The orientalists' use of this report without any indication of its weakness and untrustworthiness is indicative of how such materials are uncritically accepted and cited to support a particular assumption.

Similarly weak is the "instance" of Zayd ibn Ḥârithah of which Muir makes special mention. It is to be observed that Muir tactfully refrains from saying directly that Zayd or his parents were Christians, but indirectly introduces the subject by saying that Christianity had made progress among Zayd's ancestors and then suggests that Zayd, though a boy when sold as slave, must have remembered something of Christianity and must have communicated that knowledge to his foster father Muḥammad (ﷺ). Nothing-could be a more far-fetched inference than this; for whatever the boy Zayd had learnt about Christianity and of that whatever he could have managed to remember after his disconnection with that system for at least a quarter of a century, could be of very little use to any serious enquirer and would-be-reformer. Moreover, had Zayd acted in any way as teacher in Christianity for the Prophet and had the latter formulated his doctrines on the basis of the knowledge imparted to him by Zayd, the latter would surely have no genuine faith in the Prophet's mission and would not have followed him so dedicatedly till his death.

As regards the instance of Waraqah ibn Nawfal, great emphasis has indeed been placed on it by the orientalists. There is no doubt that Khadîjah (r.a.) took the Prophet, shortly after his receipt of the first revelation, to Waraqah for consultation. This fact, as already pointed out, shows on the one hand that the Prophet did not entertain any intention or ambition to play the role of a prophet. On the other hand it shows that on his part Waraqah also considered him a sincere and unpretentious person. Had the Prophet previously received instruction in Christianity from Waraqah he would have formed a very different opinion about the former. In fact, except for this meeting, there is no indication in the sources of the Prophet's having previously consulted Waraqah on any subject, though under the circumstances it is reasonable to assume that the two knew each other from close quarters. The same reason which has been indicated above in connection with the Prophet's journey to Syria and his alleged acquisition of Christian knowledge in the course of that journey may be adduced the more strongly in the present case. Had the Prophet been in the habit of receiving instruction in Christianity from Waraqah, that would have formed a very strong point in

the Quraysh leaders' attack on and criticism of the Prophet.

IV. THE SUPPOSED QURA'ÂNIC EVIDENCE ABOUT A MONOTHEIST INFORMANT OR INFORMANTS

This brings us to the subject of the Qur'ânic statement about the Makkan leaders' allegation that the Prophet receieved instruction from others. It is mainly on this allegation of the unbelievers that Watt and his predecessors have based the assumption of a monotheist informant or informants for the Prophet. In doing so, however, Watt, or rather C.C. Torrey, from whom he has taken his cue, has grossly misinterpreted the Qur'ânic texts. To see how this has been done it is necessary to quote in original the couple of passages cited by Watt in support of this assumption. These passages, together with Watt's translation, stand as follows:

١ - ﴿ولقد نعلم أنهم يقولون إنما يعلّمه بشر لسان الذى يلحدون إليه أعجمىّ وهذا لسان عربىّ مبين﴾ النحل (١٦ : ١٠٣)

"We know they say, It is only a person teaches him. The tongue of the one they hint at is foreign, but this (the Qur'ân) is (in) a clear Arabic tongue." (*Muḥammad's Mecca*, 45)

٢ - ﴿وقال الذين كفروا إن هذا إلا إفك افترىـه وأعانه عليه قوم ءاخرون فقد جاءو ظلما وزورا * وقالوا أسـطير الأولين اكتتبها فهى تملىٰ عليه بكرة وأصيلا﴾ الفرقان (٢٥ : ٤ - ٥)

"The unbelievers say: This is only a falsehood he invented; other people helped him with it... They said, Old-World fables, he has had written down; they are dictated to him morning and evening." (25: 4-5)

Watt, following Torrey,[1] interprets these statements, particularly the first, saying "that Muḥammad does not deny having a 'human teacher but only insists that the teaching came down from heaven'."[2] Elaborating the same statement Watt writes in his latest work that "the Qur'ân does not deny that Muḥammad was receiving information in this way" but only "insists that any material he received could not have been the Qur'ân, since a foreigner could not express himself in clear Arabic". Hence what he was given by the informant "would be factual knowledge, whereas the meaning and interpretation of the facts would come to him by the usual process of revelation."[3]

This interpretation of Watt (and Torrey) is totally wrong. It is also an

1. C.C. Torrey, *The Jewish Foundation etc., op. cit.*, 43 ff.
2. Watt, *M. at M.*, 159.
3. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 45.

attempt on Watt's part to fit in these texts, particularly the first passage, his notion of revelation (*waḥy*) which he describes as "prophetic intuition", a form of the Prophet's own "consciousness", something in the nature of "meaning" and "interpretation" distinct from the facts and words, etc. That notion of Watt's would be discussed when we come to the subject of revelation.[1] Here it should be noted that the most that can be made out of the first passage (16:103) is that there was a foreign person at Makka who had presumably had some knowledge of either Christianity or Judaism and who happened to be an acquaintance of the Prophet. Obviously this fact was taken advantage of by the Prophet's opponents to allege that he was being "taught" by that person to produce what was being given as revelation. The Qur'ân refers to this allegation by way of denying it and giving a lie to it. By no stretch of the imagination could it be suggested that the Qur'ân does not deny the fact of "receiving" information from the person alluded to and that it merely "insists" that the material thus received "could not have been the Qur'ân, since a foreigner could not express himself in clear Arabic." This latter phrase, "could not express himself in clear Arabic", is Watt's own interpretation or "tendential" shaping. The clear statement of the Qur'ân is that the tongue of the person insinuated is *'a'jamî*, i.e. "foreign". But even allowing this twist in meaning, does it at all sound logical to say that a foreigner, who could not express himself in clear Arabic, would nonetheless be able to instruct the Prophet, who by all accounts did not know any foreign language, in the details and subtleties of Christianity and Judaism?

In fact it is grossly misleading and somewhat inconsistent to say, as Torrey and Watt do, that Muḥammad (ﷺ) does not deny having a "human teacher but only insists that the teaching came down from heaven." If the insistence was that "the teaching came down from heaven", does it not constitute a denial of a human teacher? But the insistence was not simply on that the teaching came down from heaven. It was more strongly and consistently stated that the "text" of the revelation also came from heaven. In fact the main challenge of the Qur'ân was and has been to any one to come forward with a *text* similar to any of its *sûrahs*. The unbelievers' allegation also had reference to the preparation of the text of the revelation by the person they insinuated. The term *yu'allimu* (يُعَلِّم) in contemporary Arabic parlance meant not simply imparting information but communicating a text which was usu-

1. *Infra*, Ch. XX.

ally committed to memory, tranmission of knowledge being at that time almost wholly oral. And because the allegation had reference to the text of the revelation, the denial of it is made all the stronger by simply pointing out the utter unreasonableness of the insinuation, that is, by pointing out that the person insinuated was simply incapable of producing a clear Arabic text. The denial contains also an element of ridiculing the insinuation. Indeed the nature of the unbelievers' allegation is more clearly specified in the second passage (25:4-5) quoted by Watt and to which we shall presently turn our attention.

Watt's interpretation of the first passage (16:103) is wrong in three ways. In the first place, it totally ignores the context which is that it refers to the unbelievers' allegation for the sake of giving a lie to it.[1] This context is clear not only from the passage itself but also from its two immediately preceding *'âyahs* (i.e. 101 and 102). Thus *'âyah* 101 refers to the unbelievers' allegation that the Prophet was a "forger" and then rebuts it by saying that those who indulged in such allegation did not really know. "They say, thou art a forger; but most of them know not". ﴿قالوا إنما أنت مفتر بل أكثرهم لا يعلمون﴾ The same denial is continued and stated in a positive form in *'âyah* 102 which emphasizes that the revelation was truly brought down from "your Lord" by the angel Jibrîl. "Say, it has been truly brought down by the Spirit of Holiness (*Jibrîl*) from your Lord." ﴿قل نزله روح القدس من ربك﴾. *'Âyah* 103, which is quoted by Watt, is merely a continuation of the same topic of the unbelievers' allegation and the same emphatic denial of it. In fact the expression: "And indeed We know they say" ﴿ولقد نعلم أنهم يقولون﴾, particularly the particle and pronoun *'annahum* (أنهم) clearly indicate this connection with the previous *'âyahs*. In his interpretation, thus, Watt ignores the context altogether and in effect simply adopts the allegation of the Prophet's adversaries.

Secondly, Watt is mistaken in saying that the Qur'ân does not deny what he calls the receipt of information from the foreigner. Leaving aside the context, the *'âyah* 103 itself contains an unmistakable denial in the term *yulḥidûna* (يلحدون). It bears a derogatory sense and a reproach, namely, that

1. It may be noted that Watt and his preceptor Bell tend to belittle the context in interpreting a Qura'ânic passage by assuming that the "unit" of revelation was almost always a short passage. But no sudden change of subject-matter, nor of style of language, nor of the form of address from third person to first person, etc., which according to them indicate the disconnection of a particular passage from its preceding or following *'âyahs* are applicable in the present instance.

of deviation from the truth and the just course, or perversion. All the competent authorities are agreed that *'ilḥâd* (إلحاد) means "falsely stating" or "falsifying", *takdhîb* (تكذيب).[1] In fact the very verb *yulḥidûna* occurs at two other places in the Qur'ân, namely, 7:180 and 41:40; and at both the places it clearly means a wrongful and unwarranted act.[2] Significantly enough. A.J. Arberry in his translation of the Qur'ân translates the expression at both the places as blaspheming — "and leave those who blaspheme His names" and "Those who blaspheme Our signs."[3] More important still, the Qur'ân itself uses the root-word *'ilḥâd* (إلحاد) in apposition to *ẓulm* (ظلم) or injustice at 22:25 ﴿ومن يرد فيه بإلحاد بظلم نذقه من عذاب أليم﴾ and Arberry rightly translates it: "And whosoever purposes to violate it wrongfully" etc.[4] Hence, though the orientalists translate the expression at 16:103 as simply "they hint at", its correct rendering should be "they wrongfully suggest", "they unjustly hint at", "they unfairly insinuate", or some such words. It may further be pointed out that the Arabic equivalent of "they hint at" is *yushîrûna 'ilâ* (يشيرون إلى), not *yulḥidûna 'ilâ* (يلحدون إلى). Thus the correct meaning of the *'âyah*16:103 should be: "We indeed know they allege that a human being tutors him. The language of the individual they unjustly insinuate is foreign, while this (the Qur'ân) is in clear Arabic." Thus, far from there being no denial of the allegation, the text of the *'âyah* cleary labels it as an *'ilḥâd*, an unjust insinuation.

Thirdly, Watt also ignores the decisive or rather silencing rebuttal made in the last part of the *'âyah* where it is emphasized that the language of the individual unfairly insinuated is "foreign". There is in fact a two-fold denial of the allegation in this single statement. In the first place, since the person spoke a foreign tongue, it was impossible on the Prophet's part, who did not know any foreign language, to follow that person's "instruction" or "exposition". Secondly as the Qur'ân is in clear Arabic, it could not have been com-

1. See for instance Ibn al-'Athîr, *Al-Nihâyah Fî Gharîb al-Ḥadîth wa al-'Athar*, part IV, باب اللام مع الحاء ; Al-Zamakhsharî, *Al-Kashshâf*, II, Beirut print, n.d., 429; Al-Qurṭubî, (*Tafsîr*), part VII, 328 and part X, 178 and Muḥammad ibn 'Alî al-Shawkânî, *Fatḥ al-Qadîr etc.*, part I, second impression, 1964 / 1383, p. 270 and part III, 195.

2. The two statements run respectively as:

﴿ولله الأسماء الحسنىٰ فادعوه بها وذروا الذين يلحدون فى أسمـٰـئـه...﴾ and ﴿إن الذين يلحدون فى ءايـٰتـنا..﴾

3. A.J. Arberry, *The Koran*, O.U.P. (Oxford Paperbacks), 1986, pp. 165 and 495.

4. *Ibid.*, 336.

posed for the Prophet by that individual. Thus neither in the sense of imparting what is called "facts" and "information", nor in the sense of formulating the text and wording of the revelation could the foreigner act as 'trainer" for the Prophet.

The denial of the unbelievers' insinuation is continued in the immediately following two *'âyahs* (16:104-105). *'Âyah* 104 warns the unbelivers' of the evil consequences of their rejection of the "signs" of Allah, and *'âyah* 105 retorts by saying: "It is those who believe not in the signs of Allah that forge falsehood: It is those who lie" ﴿إنما يفترى الكذب الذين لا يؤمنون بئايٰت الله وأولٰئك هم الكٰذبون﴾ . Thus 16:103 together with its immediately preceding and following couple of *'âyahs* constitute a distinct unit of which the purport is to deny and rebut the unbelievers' allegation in a very positive, forceful and unmistakable manner. It should also be noted that there is nothing in these *'âyahs* that warrants the assumption that the unbelievers were referring only to the receipt of information or facts as distinguished from their "meaning" and "interpretation", as Watt would have us believe. On the contrary the nature and wording of the denial, especially the emphasis on the language of the person insinuated, make it obvious that the allegation had reference to the Prophet's inability to produce, by himself, the text of the revelation.

This nature of the unbelievers' allegation is more specifically spelt out in 25:4-5 which Watt quotes and which should be considered along with 16:103. The passage 25:4-5 says that the unbelievers' allegation was that the Prophet had the text of the revelation, which to them was only "old-world fables", *written* for him and dictated to him morning and evening. It is noteworthy that in translating this passage Watt omits the last part of *'âyah* 4 which reads: ﴿فقد جاءو ظلما وزورا﴾ , "they have indeed come up with an injustice and falsehood." The omission has obviously been made to facilitate the presentation of the assumption that there is no denial of the allegation made by the unbelievers.

This passage 25:4-5 or rather this *sûrah* is unanimously regarded as earlier than *sûrah* 16 in the order of revelation.[1] This is all the more reason why the allegation contained in 16:103 should be considered in conjunction with

1. This *sûrah* (*al-Furqân*, No. 25) is placed between the 38th and 42nd in the order of revelation by classical Muslim scholars. On the other hand orientalists like Rodwell and Nöldeke count it as the 66th in the order of revelation, and Muir places it as the 74th. *Sûrah* 16 (*al-Naḥl*), on the other hand, is placed between the 67th and 72nd by the Muslim scholars; =

the allegation noted in 25:4-5. For it would be obviously absurd on the unbelievers' part first to suggest that the Prophet had the passages of the revelation written for him by others and recited by them to him morning and evening, and then to state that he had only obtained the facts and information from an individual. It is thus obvious that the allegation of incapacity on the Prophet's part to produce the revelation by himself had reference not simply to the "facts" and "information" but to the text and language of the revelation as well. But whether one likes to assume that the allegation had reference to "facts" and "information" alone, or whether one admits the obvious fact that the allegation had reference to both the facts and the text, the concluding part of *'âyah* 25:4, which Watt chooses to withhold from his readers, charaterizes the unbelievers' allegation as a manifest injustice (*ẓulm* ظلم) and a palpable falsehood (*zûr* زور). Nothing could be a stronger and clearer denial than this.

Watt rightly mentions that the Muslim commentators of the Qur'ân are not in agreement about the identity of the person of persons "hinted at" by the unbelievers and give several names, "mostly of Christian slaves" in Makka.[1] But he does not complete the story; nor does he pursue the questions that naturally arise out of his assumption. These questions are: (a) Why, after Muḥammad (ﷺ) had come forward with his claim to Prophethood and after he had passed some time in publicly calling people to believe in his mission — why any knoledgeable Jew or Christian should have come forward to help promote his claim by supplying him with

= while Rodwell and Nöldeke place it as the 73rd, Muir puts it as the 88th and A. Jeffery as the 46th. (See Muḥammad Khalîfa, *The Sublime Qur'ân and Orientalism*, London and New York, 1983, Appendix II; and Muḥammad 'Izzat Darwâzah, *Sîrat al-Rasûl*, I, Beirut, n.d. [1400 H.], pp. 145-149.

1. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 45. Several names were indeed suggested. The most frequently mentioned name is Jabr, a Christian slave of Al-Fakîh ibn al-Mughîrah, who had embraced Islam. Ibn Isḥâq says that this Jabr was a slave of Banû al-Hadrami. Another name suggested is Ya'ish, a slave of Banû al-Ḥaḍramî or Banû al-Mughîrah, or of Banû 'Âmir ibn Lu'ayy. It is further said that Banû al-Ḥaḍramî had two slaves, one named Jabr and the other named Yasâr or Nabt. They were sword-smiths and the Prophet is stated to have occasionally visited them and talked to them. Ibn 'Abbâs says that the person referred to was Bal'âm, a Christian who had some knowledge of the Bible. According to Al-Qurṭubî, the person alluded to was a Greek Christian at Makka named Mysara. Another report says he was 'Addâs, a servant of 'Utḅah ibn Rabî'ah. A still another view is that he was Âbs, a servant of Ḥuwayrith ibn 'Abd al'Uzzâ. See al-Qurṭubi, (*Tafsîr*), X, 177-178 and Al-Zamakhsharî, *Kashshâf*, II, 429.

information about Judaism and Christianity? (b) Why the Quraysh leaders, with their power and influence and their knowledge and control of affairs of the then not very big town of Makka, and specially of their constant watch upon the activities of the Prophet and his acquaintances, why did they not make use of any such "informant" to expose the Prophet's "pretensions"? (c) If, on the other hand, such "informant" or "informants" were from among the Christian and Jewish converts to Islam, why should they have continued to have faith in the Prophet's mission and leadership when they found out that he needed their knowledge and help in formulating what he gave out as revelation from Allah? Significanly enough, Watt does neither raise these very pertinent questions nor does he seek an answer to them. If he did either, he would have found that the Muslim commentators have made it clear that the Quraysh leaders made the allegation in question in view of the existence in the ranks of the Muslims of a few Christian converts and that the Makkan leaders did not stop by simply making the allegation. They tortured a number of such converts in order to extort an admission from them to the effect that Muḥammad (ﷺ) had obtained help from them. It is further mentioned that one of such victims of oppression, Jabr, when persecuted and tortured to the extreme, gave out the significant reply: "It is not I who teaches Muḥammad, rather it is he who teaches and guides me."[1]

V. THE SO-CALLED GROWTH IN ACCURACY IN BIBLICAL INFORMATION

Indeed, it does not at all stand to reason that a person of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) intelligence and common sense would obtain from hearsay and secondary sources a perfunctory and superficial knowledge of the contents of the Judaeo-Christian scriptures, which is what the orientalists suggest at the most, and would then proceed, on the basis of that knowledge, to utter doctrines and stories claiming them to be divine revelation. Yet Watt, following his predecessors, not only advances such an absurd proposition but even goes further to suggest in effect that the Prophet was simpleton and rash enough to give out as revelation whatever little he learnt at first of a particular Old-Testament story and subsequently modified or improved upon it as he learnt more of it. Thus, citing a number of Qur'ânic passages relating to Abraham and Lûṭ (peace be on them) which will be considered presently and which he thinks show "the growth in accuracy of the acquaintance with

1. Al-Qurṭubî, (*Tafsîr*), X, 177.

Old-Testament stories" Watt concludes that "Muḥammad's knowledge of these stories was growing and that therefore he was getting information from a person or persons familiar with them."[1]

The passages cited by Watt are 37:135 C; 26:171 E(D); 27:58 E(D); 7:81 D-E; 15:60 DE; 11:83 E+ and 29:32 E+. It may be noted that Watt follows Flugel's numbering of the *'âyahs* which differs slightly from the current and standard numbering; but there is no difficulty in identifying the passages by looking at the meaning. He does not quote the passages in original, nor does he give their translation. Also, while citing only one *'âyah* of each *sûrah* he evidently has in view a number of them relating to the topic. The letters placed beside each *'âyah* are indicative of Bell's dating of the the passages, C standing for Makkan, E for early Madinan and E+ for Madinan period.[2]

It may be noted at the outset that the assumption of "growth in accuracy" is based essentially upon the above mentioned dating of the several passages. But this dating is acknowledged to be only "provisional"[3] and Watt himself entertains doubts about its accuracy.[4] Moreover, in his latest work he discards Bell's dating in favour of R. Blachere's which closely follows that of Nöldeke.[5] Also the way in which two letters indicating two different periods, sometimes one in brackets, are placed beside an *'âyah*, is confusing. It should also be noted that all the passages cited are counted as Makkan by the classical Muslim scholars. In any case an assumption of gradual growth in accuracy based upon a system of dating about the accuracy of which the author himself is in doubt and which he discards in his latest work is hazardous and misleading.

Apart from the question of dating, however, the passages themselves do not really sustain the theory of "growth in accuracy" as such. Thus the first point which Watt attempts to make is that in the two first mentioned passages (37:135 and 26:171) the member of Lûṭ's "party" not saved is "an old woman", in all the other passages it is his wife. This statement of Watt's is not correct and is clearly a misunderstanding of the two passages in question. The statement at both the places starts with *'illâ* (الا except) which

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, 159 (Excursus B).
2. *Ibid.*, IX.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Watt, "The dating of the Qur'ân: A review of Richard Bell's theories", *J.R.A.S.*, 1957, pp. 46-56 (specially pp. 54-56).
5. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 4.

shows that it is merely a continuation of what precedes it in the passage. It is to be noted that in the *'âyah* preceding at each place the material term is *'ahl*. Hence the meaning at both the places is that all of Lûṭ's *'ahl* except "an old woman" were saved. The primary meaning of *'ahl* is "family", even "wife"; while in a secondary or extended sense it may mean "people" or "inhabitants". This secondary meaning is clearly inapplicable here for it is obviously not the intention of the passages in question to say that all of Lûṭ's people were saved except an old woman etc; nor could it be suggested that among all those of Lûṭ's people who were punished and destroyed, there was only one old woman. The obvious meaning of the two consecutive *'âyahs* at each of the two places (37:134-135 and 26:170-171) is that all the members of Lûṭ's family were saved except "an old woman". Thus at both the places Lûṭ's relationship with her is expressed in an indirect way. The term "old woman" is used here out of disapproval of her unbelief, not out of an ignorance of her relationship with Lûṭ. In all the other places, however, the relationship is expressed directly and explicitly. There is thus no case of inaccuracy in the first two passages, nor of "growth in accuracy" in the other five passages.

Similarly ill-conceived is Watt's second point. He says that in the first four of the above mentioned passages there is "no awareness of the connexion between Abraham and Lot"; whereas in the other three passages "there is explicit mention of the connexion with Abraham."[1]

Now, a reference to the passages 15:60, 11:83 and 29:32 shows that "the connexion between Abraham and Lot" which Watt finds in them is only an indication of their contemporaneity. This comes out as an incidental detail of the manner in which God's wrath and punishment befell Lûṭ's people. The passages tell that God sent some angels who, on their way to Lûṭ's people, also met Ibrâhîm, gave him the good tidings of another son to be born to him and informed him that they were going to Lûṭ's people to punish them. Thereupon Ibrâhîm made some pleadings for Lûṭ. Obviously this incidental detail was not called for in the other passages where the theme and context are different. In fact the emphasis of the first four passages (37:135; 26:171; 27:58 and 7:81) is on God's favours upon the Prophets mentioned and how they were helped to emerge successful through their trials and the enmity of their own people. The emphasis of the other three passages (15:60; 11:83

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, 159.

and 29:32) is, on the other hand, on the conduct of the Prophets' opponents and the evil consequences of their opposition to and rejection of the message delivered to them. The first group of four passages are addressed mainly to the Prophet and his followers by way of reassuring and consoling them; the other three are addressed mainly to the unbelievers by way of warning them about the ultimate evil consequences of their disbelief and opposition. Hence in the first group of four passages no details are given of the retribution that befell the rejecters of the truth, nor is there a mention of the angels who acted as the agents of such retribution upon the people of Lûṭ. On the other hand, in the other three passages such details are given, including the coming of the angels through whose conversation with Ibrâhîm the so-called "connexion" between him and Lûṭ appears. There is thus here, again, no deficiency as such in the first four passages, nor any growth of accuracy in the other three passages.

It should be mentioned here that the Qur'ân refers to historical events and the stories of the previous Prophets not for the sake of narrating history or telling a story; it does so essentially for the sake of illustrating a lesson or drawing a moral. Hence different or the same aspects of the life-story of a particular Prophet are mentioned at different places; and nowhere is a particular historical event or the story of a Prophet narrated in full and at a stretch, as is usually the case with ordinary history or story books. This apparent repetition or incompleteness in the stories has been seized by the orientalists to advance the theory of "growth in accuracy". But a careful look at the passages, or rather the *sûrahs*, would at once expose the speciousness of the theory. It may also be pointed out that the mere non-mention of a detail, which is not called for by the theme and context at one place, and the mention of that detail at another place where the theme and context demand it, is no ground for suggesting inaccuracy in the first instance, and growth of accuracy in the second. Again, even the gradual unfolding of facts and details does not in itself prove that a human informant or informants were supplying information to the Prophet. The whole of the teachings of Islam in the Qur'ân, the rules and duties, are indeed spelt out gradually and over a period of some twenty-three years. To cite this fact as a proof of the Prophet's supposedly gradual acquisition of knowledge from some human tutor or tutors would be a height of presumption.

Apart from these reasons, a closer look at the passages shows that there is indeed no deficiency in information as such in the four first mentioned pas-

sages or *sûrahs*. For not to speak of the Prophets to 'Âd and Thamûd (Hûd and Ṣâliḥ) who are mentioned in them but who do not find any mention in the Bible, even with regard to Ibrâhîm such details are given in these *sûrahs* as are not to be found in the Old Testament. Thus it is in these *sûrahs* that Ibrâhîm is depicted as a propagator of monotheism and a very clear account is given of his struggles for its sake, his argumentation with his father and people over their mistaken beliefs, his denunciation and breaking of the idols, his ordeal by fire, his travel to al-Hijâz, etc. None of these aspects of his life-story is mentioned anywhere in the Old Testament. On the other hand, in the other three passages where a "growth in accuracy" is assumed on account of the mention in them of the coming of the angels and their conversation with Ibrâhîm, it is noteworthy that the Qur'ânic account of this incident differs materially from that of the Old Testament. For instance, it is clearly mentioned in the three passages under reference that Ibrâhîm grew curious about his "guests" (the angles in human forms) only when they declined to partake of the meal prepared for them, which led to their disclosing their identity and their further conversation with him including the giving of the good tidings of a birth of another son to him and their commission about the punishment of Lûṭ's people. The Old Testament, on the other hand, simply states that as soon as Ibrâhîm saw "three men" he "ran to meet them from the tent door", invited them to be his guests, and on their acceptance of it preapared a meal for them, "and they did eat."[1] Similarly they "did eat" the food prepared for them by Lûṭ.[2] Thus neither is a case of deficiency in information established in respect of the first four passages in question, nor is a case of dependence upon the Old Testament details proved in respect of the other three passages. In both the instances the Qur'ân goes beyond the Old Testament and also differs materially from it. Hence the sources of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) information must have been other than the extant Old Testament and any other human being conversant with it; and no theory of "growth in accuracy" can logically be sustained here.

Indeed, far from not denying the receipt of information from an "informant" or "informants", the Qur'ân throws out a challenge declaring that neither the Prophet nor his people previously knew the facts that were being revealed to him. Thus 11:49 says:

1. Gen. 18:1-8.
2. Gen. 19:3.

﴿تلك من أنباء الغيب نوحيها إليك ما كنت تعلمها أنت ولا قومك من قبل هذا...﴾ (١١ : ٤٩)

"That is of the tidings of the unseen, that We reveal to thee: thou didst not know them, neither thou nor thy people, before this..." (11:49)[1]

This *'âyah* together with some others to the same effect are some of the strongest Qur'ânic evidences showing that the Prophet had no previous knowledge of what was being revealed to him. Hence, as in the case of the Qur'ânic evidence in support of the Prophet's "illiteracy",[2] so in this instance too Watt has misinterpreted this *'âyah* in order to sustain his assumption. Thus proceeding on the basis of his assumption that the Qur'ân shows the Prophet's receipt of information from someone, Watt states that this *'âyah* 11:49 poses an "embarrassment" to those "who want to uphold the sincerity of Muḥammad" and then attempts to explain away this supposed embarrassment by having recourse to his peculiar notion about revelation (*waḥy*). He says that the facts and information about the prophetic stories came from human sources but the "teaching" and "ulterior significance of the stories came to Muḥammad by revelation".[3] But having said this Watt seems to recall his general thesis that even in respect of ideas and concepts the Prophet borrowed them from Judaeo-Christian sources. Hence Watt hastens to add that since "Judaeo-Christian ideas had become acclimatized in the Hijaz", the ideas that the Qur'ân "presupposed did not require to be specially communicated", but that the "precise form" in which they were to be "integrated so as to be relevant to the contemporary situation, could have been given them only by the prophetic intuition."[4]

It must at once be pointed out that the assumption of the Prophet's having received information from any human source is totally groundless and wrong. Also the Prophet and his people did not know the facts that were being given through the revelation. Hence the *'âyah* quoted above does in no way pose an embarrassment; nor is there any need for explaining away that supposed embarrassment by reducing the meaning and scope of revelation to merely "the precise form" in which the stories or the ideas were to be "integrated" so as to make them relevant to the contemporary situation.

That the Prophet was receiving the facts (as well as the text) through the

1. The translation is that of A.J. Arberry (*op. cit*, 217) with slight modification.
2. *Supra*, pp. 241-250.
3. Watt, *M. at M.*, 160.
4. *Ibid.*, 160-161.

revelation is clear from the Qur'ânic passages themselves. The key word in the passage quoted above (11:49) is *'anbâ'* (أنباء). Watt himself translates this word as "stories". Nonetheless he suggests that their "teaching" and "significance" only should be understood. This suggestion is made just for the sake of fitting in this *'âyah* with his assumption. The plain Arabic equivalent of *'anbâ'* is *'akhabâr* (أخبار); and both mean "facts" or "accounts"; and A.J. Arberry's rendering of the expression as "tidings" comes nearer to conveying the correct meaning. Indeed *'anbâ'*, when it emanates from God,[1] means "facts" and "true accounts" without the slightest doubt or untruth about them. But even if Watt's translation of the word as "stories" is allowed, there is nothing here or elsewhere in the Qur'ân to sustain the claim that it means merely "teaching" and "significance" to the exclusion of the facts. It may be noted that besides the various derivatives from the root, the word *naba'*(نبأ) in its singular form occurs in the Qur'ân at some 17 places,[2] while the plural form *'anbâ'* in some 12 places.[3] At each of these 29 places it signifies facts and circumstances. It is not necessary to look into all these places. It will suffice if we look at only the two other places, besides 11:49, where it has been used with the same emphatic assertion that the Prophet had no prior knowledge of what was coming to him as revelation. One of these places is 3:44 which runs as follows:

﴿ذلك من أنباء الغيب نوحيه إليك وما كنت لديهم إذ يلقون أقلامهم أيهم يكفل مريم وما كنت لديهم إذ يختصمون﴾ (٣ : ٤٤)

"That is of the tidings of the Unseen, that We reveal to thee; for thou wast not with them, when they were casting quills which of them should have charge of Mary; thou wast not with them when they were disputing."[4]

And the other *'âyah*, 12:102, runs as follows:

﴿ذلك من أنباء الغيب نوحيه إليك وما كنت لديهم إذ أجمعوا أمرهم وهم يمكرون﴾ (١٢ : ١٠٢)

"That is of the tidings of the Unseen that We reveal to thee: thou wast not with them when they agreed upon their plan, devising."[5]

1. Watt does not of course admit that the revelation received by the Prophet was from God.

2. 5:27; 6:34; 6:67; 7:175; 9:70; 10:71; 14:9; 18:3; 26:69; 27:22; 28:3; 28:21; 38:67; 38:88; 49:6; 64:5 and 78:2.

3. 3:44; 6:5; 7:101; 11:49; 11:100; 11:120, 12:102; 20:99; 26:6; 28:66; 33:20 and 44:4.

4. A.J. Arberry, *op. cit.*, 51.

5. *Ibid.*, 237.

It is noteworthy that the last part of each of these two *'âyahs* beginning from "thou wast not with them" is an explantion of the *'anbâ'* given to the Prophet and it refers to specific *facts and circumstances*, not to mere "meaning" and "significance" of some facts.

The same emphasis on the Prophet's innocence and lack of prior knowledge of the *facts* that were being revealed to him is reiterated (though without the specific expression *'ânbâ'*) in another highly expressive Qur'ânic passage, 28:44-46, which runs as follows:

﴿وما كنت بجانب الغربى إذ قضينا إلى موسى الأمر وما كنت من الشـٰهدين * ولـٰكنّا أنشأنا قرونا فتطاول عليهم العمر وما كنت ثاويا فى أهل مدين تتلوا عليهم ءايـٰتنا ولكنا كنا مرسلين * وما كنت بجانب الطور إذ نادينا ولكن رحمة من ربك لتنذر قوما ما أتـٰهم من نذير من قبلك لعلهم يتذكرون﴾ (٢٨ : ٤٤- ٤٦)

"Thou wast not upon the western side when We decreed to Moses the commandment, nor wast thou of those witnessing; but We raised up generations, and long their lives continued. Neither wast thou a dweller among the Midianites, reciting to them Our signs; but We were sending Messengers. Thou wast not upon the side of the Mount when We called; but for a mercy from thy Lord, that thou mayest warn a people to whom no warner came before thee, and that haply they may remember." (28:44-46)[1]

All these Qur'ânic passages (11:49, 3:44, 12:102 and 24:44-46) are unequivocal confirmations of the Prophet's innocence and lack of prior knowledge of the facts and circumstances he was giving out by means of the revelation to him. They also constitute irrefutable contradictions of the assumption that he received facts and ideas from human sources and then had had recourse to "revelation" in order to obtain only "the precise form" in which they were to be integrated so as to make them relevant to the contemporary situation. Also these passages are, as already pointed out, in the nature of challenges to the Prophet's contemporary adversaries who similarly insinuated that he received information from some human beings. It should be noted that every part of the Qur'ân was given out to the public the moment it was revealed. In fact the various allegations of the unbelievers and their rebuttal as they occur in the Qur'ân are themselves unmistakable proofs of instant publication of the texts of the revelations. And keeping in view the dates of revelation of the above mentioned passages, which vary from early Makkan to mid-Madinan periods (and Watt himself classifies the

1. *Ibid.*, 396-397.

first mentioned passage, 11:49, as C-E+, i.e., ealy Makkan to mid-Madinan period), it is evident that the challenge was repeated not only at Makka but also at Madina where there were a number of well-informed Jews who were against the Prophet. Yet, there is no indication in the sources of their having taken up the challenge in any way, nor of their having pointed out any individual or any other source from which Muḥammad (ﷺ) could have obtained the information. Nor, as already pointed out, could the unbelieving Quraysh leaders, in spite of their ceaseless efforts and inhuman tortures upon the few Christian converts at Makka, elicit an admission from them that they had taught the Prophet anything.

VI. DIFFERENCES IN THE QUR'ÂNIC AND BIBLICAL ACCOUNTS

That the above mentioned passages relate to facts and also prove that the Prophet did not receive the facts from any person conversant with the Bible is further evident from the factual differences that are noticeable in the Qur'ânic and Biblical accounts of the same Prophets. The first mentioned passage, 11:49, occurs in the context of the account of Nûḥ. Unlike the Old Testament, it is the Qur'ân which specifically mentions that he preached monothesim and called his people to the worship of only One God. Again, unlike the Old Testament, it tells that the deluge did not come except after Nûḥ had faced all sorts of opposition and troubles in the cause of his mission and except after he had become despaired of his people's ever receiving guidance, and also except after God had revealed to him that they would not believe. Thirdly, it is the Qur'ân which mentions that only those who believed in God were saved. The Qur'ân also refers to what happened to Nûḥ's son for his refusal to accept the truth and how he was drowned. Fourthly, the Old Testament says that God became somewhat repentant (?) for His having caused the devastation, resolved never again to do so and, in order to remind Himself of this resolution and "covenant" with Nûḥ, set a bow in the sky (rainbow), thus implying also the weakness of forgetfulness on His part.[1] On the contrary, the Qur'ân is remarkably free from such unworthy imputations to God. Also, unlike the Old Testament, it does not say that Nûḥ offered a sacrifice to pacify God's wrath.[2] It is more with reference to such facts as are not mentioned in the Old Testament but are stated clearly in the Qur'ân that it challengingly tells the Prophet that neither he

1. Gen. 8:21 & 9:11-16.
2. Gen. 8:20.

nor his people previously knew them.

Similarly the second passage, 3:44, comes in the context of the story of Mary and Jesus. The differences between their story in the Qur'ân and that in the New Testament are more remarkable. The passage itself refers to the incident of her care and protection. Secondly, the Qur'ân clears her of all imputations of being of an unworthy character and emphaticaly declares her purity and chastity and states that God selected her as the noblest lady for the extraordinary honour of being the mother of Jesus — "O Mary! God has chosen thee and purified thee — chosen thee above the women of all the nations." ﴿يـٰمريم إن الله اصطفـٰك وطهرك واصطفـٰك على نساء العـٰلمين﴾[1] At the same time it makes it very clear that she was no more than a human being and that she was as much in need of praying to God as anyone else — "O Mary! worship thy Lord devoutly; prostrate thyself and bow down (in prayer) with those who bow down." ﴿يـٰمريم اقنتى لربك واسجدى واركعى مع الراكعين﴾[2] As regards Jesus, the Qur'ân mentions even such of his miracles as are not related in the New Testament. For intance, his speaking to the people while he was in the cradle,[3] his giving life to clay birds by God's permission,[4] and the table that descended unto him from the heaven are mentioned only in the Qur'ân. Besides these, so far as the conceptual aspects are concerned, the Qur'ân categorically says that Jesus was no more than a Prophet, that he was not god,[5] nor a son of God,[6] nor one of the Trinity,[7] nor was he crucified.[8]

The third of the passages, 12:102, comes at the end of the story of Yûsuf which the Qur'an designates as "the most beautiful of stories" (*'aḥsan al-qaṣaṣ* أحسن القصص). This story is told in the Qur'ân throughout in a note of spirituality which is lacking in the Old Testament. The distinctions between the two may be best illustrated by placing some of the salient facts in both in juxtaposition as follows:

1. Q. 3:42.
2. Q.3:43.
3. Q. 3:46.
4. Q. 3:49.
5. Q. 5:19; 4:171
6. Q. 4:171; 6:101; 10:68; 17:111; 18:4-5; 19:35; 19:88-89; 19:91-92; 21:26; 23:91; 25:2; 37:152; 39:4; 43:81; 72:3 and 112:3.
7. Q. 4:171; 5:76.
8. Q. 4:157.

The story of Yûsuf in:

The Qur'ân	*The Old testament*
(1) The Qur'ân says that Ya'qûb's special love for Yûsuf was due to his dream and the former's notion of a great future for his son. (12:4-6)	(1) The Old Testament says that Ya'qub's love for Yûsuf was due to his being the son of the former's old age. (Gen 37:3).
(2) The Qur'ân says that Yusûf's brothers conspired against him before taking him out with them. (12:9-10)	(2) No mention of it in the Old Testament.
(3) The Qur'ân states that it was Yûsuf's brothers who asked their father to let Yûsuf go out with them. (12:11-14)	(3) The Old Testament, on the other hand, makes Ya'qûb ask Yûsuf to go out with his brothers. (Gen. 37:13-14)
(4) The Qur'ân shows that Yûsuf did not divulge his dream to his brothers. (12:5)	(4) The Old Testament says that Yûsuf told about his dreams to his brothers. (Gen. 37:5,9)
(5) The Qur'ân says that Yûsuf's brothers threw him into a pit whereform a passing caravan picked him up and subsequently sold him as a slave in Egypt. (12:15,19)	(5) The Old Testament says that Yûsuf's brothers first threw him into a pit and then took him out and sold him to a passing company of merchants. (Gen 23-28)
(6) The Qur'ân shows that Ya'qûb did not believe the story given out by his sons of Yûsuf's having been devoured by an animal. Nor did Ya'qûb become despaired of getting him back someday. (12:16-18)	(6) The Old Testament says that Ya'qûb readily believed his sons' false story, became despaired of getting him back and mourned his loss for a long time. (Gen. 37:33-34.)
(7) The Qur'ân states that it was 'Azîz's wife who attempted to	(7) The Old Testament says that 'Azîz's wife shouted and called for

seduce Yûsuf and shut the door of her room for the purpose, whereupon Yûsuf ran away from her. She snatched her shirt from behind which was torn as Yûsuf rushed towards the door. (12:23-25)

help whereupon Yûsuf left his clothes in her hands and fled (Gen. 39:12)

(8) The Qur'ân says that when in the course of Yûsuf's running away he and 'Azîz's wife were at the door, her husband unexpectedly arrived there. She then hastened to allege that Yûsuf had attempted to violate her honour and without waiting for her husband's opinion demanded that Yûsuf be put in prison or be appropriately punished. (12:25)

(8) The Old Testament says that 'Azîz came back home afterwards when his wife informed him of Yûsuf's alleged offence, saying that as she cried out for help Yûsuf left his clothes to her and fled. (Gen. 39:14-18)

(9) The Qur'ân says that Yûsuf defended himself then and there at the door telling the truth that it was she who had attempted to seduce him. (12:26)

(9) No mention of it in the Old Testament.

(10) The Qur'ân further says that a witness of the household pointed out that if Yûsuf's shirt was torn in the front he was to blame; but if it was torn in the backside she was guilty. (12:26-27)

(10) No mention of it in the Old Testament.

(11) As the shirt was torn in the backside 'Azîz realized the truth of Yûsuf's statement, asked him to pass it over in silence and also asked her to seek Allah's forgiveness for her sinful conduct (12:28-29)

(11) The Old Testament says that 'Azîz's anger shot up as soon as he heard his wife's complaint and instantly put Yûsuf into prison. (Gen. 39:19-20)

(12) Information about the affair nonetheless leaked out and the ladies of the town started whispering among themselves that 'Azîz's wife had attempted to seduce her slave. Coming to know of this whispering 'Azîz's wife invited the ladies to a banquet where at the end of the dinner she gave each lady a knife and asked them to cut the fruits before them. At the same time she asked Yûsuf to come out before them. They were so bewitched by the beauty and countenance of Yûsuf that each of them cut her hand with the knife instead of cutting the fruit each was holding. Exultantly 'Azîz's wife confessed before them her deed and insisted that if Yûsuf did not accede to her solicitation he would surely be put in prison and humbled. (12:29-32)	(12) No mention of the incident in the Old Testament.
(13) Yûsuf himself preferred going to prison in view of the persistence of 'Azîz's wife in her design. 'Azîz also put Yûsuf in prison in order to avoid an imminent scandal. (12:33-35)	(13) No mention of it in the Old Testament
(14) The Qur'ân alone says that when the King of Egypt sent his messenger to the prison conveying his decision to release Yûsuf from imprisonment and to appoint him to a high post, Yûsuf did not jump at the offer but demanded that the	(14) The Old Testament does not refer to Yûsuf's demand for public vindication of his innocence and says that he instantly accepted the king's offer.

affair which had brought him into prison be first enquired and his innocence publicly vindicated. (12:50)

(15) The public hearing was duly held and Yûsuf innocence vindicated by the confession of ‘Azîz's wife herself of her guilt as well as by the testimony of the ladies who had cut their hands and before whom ‘Azîz's wife had also confessed her guilt. (12:51-52 & 12:32).

(15) No mention of these facts in the Old Testament.

(16) The Qur’ân ends the story by narrating how Yûsuf was finally united with his father and brothers and refers to the whole outcome as a realization of his dream. (12:100)

(16) No reference is made in the Old Testament to the final realization of Yûsuf's dream.

(17) Finally, The Qur’ân rightly terms the Egyptian ruler in this story as "King" and not as "Pharaoh", for the latter designation did not come in vogue before the 18th dynasty, more particularly before the reign of Thetmos III (1490-1436 B.C.)

(17) The Old Testament, on the other hand, throughout terms the Egyptian ruler as "Pharaoh".

These are some of the factual differences in the Qur’ânic and Old Testament accounts of the story of Yûsuf. A detailed comparison would reveal more such differences.

Similarly the fourth passage under reference, 28:44-46, comes at the end of a narration of some the facts relating to Musâ (Moses) (28:2-43). Incidentally, this account of the *fact* starts with the statement: "We recite unto thee some of the *nabâ’* (نبأ / story / account) relating to Mûsâ." The Qur’ân indeed tells the story of Mûsâ and his brother Hârûn, as also that of the Israelites in far greater detail than what occurs in the Old Testament. There are of course some similarities between the two accounts; but the differences and

the new elements in the Qur'ân are fundamental.[1] The most important distinction is that the Old Testament, though it represents Mûsâ as the "Law-giver", nonetheless accuses him and also Hârûn of several improprieties and ultimately depicts them as persons who had betrayed God and deserved His wrath.[2] It is even alleged that Hârûn was instrumental in introducing the worship of the golden calf. The Qur'ân, on the other hand, clears them of such accusations and emphatically asserts that they were God's chosen Prophets, were recepients of His favours, revelation and scripture, were free from the imputations ascribed to them and were men who sincerely and devoutly discharged their duties as God's Prophets by calling their people to the worship of the One Only God.[3] It also specifically mentions that it was the Israelite Sâmirî, not Hârûn, who was responsible for introducing the worship of the calf.[4] It is also in the Qur'ân alone that the story of Mûsâ's travel to the "meeting place of two seas" is given.[5] Again, it is only in the Qur'ân that the significant incident of the Pharaoh's plan to kill Mûsâ is revealed and it is further stated that a "believer" at the Pharaoh's court dissuaded him from carrying out his plan.[6]

Even with regard to details there are a number of differences. Thus, as the writer in the *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam* points out, in the Qur'ân it is the Pharaoh's wife, not his daughter, who rescues the infant Mûsâ from the river; instead of the seven shepherdesses in the Bible, it is only two in the Qur'ân whom Mûsâ assists; and instead of ten plagues the Qur'ân speaks of nine miracles. Also Mûsâ strikes twelve springs out of the rock, one for each tribe. "Then there are new features: Mûsâ repents of having slain the Egyptian. Mûsâ sees the burning bush at night and desires to take a brand from its fire..." The Qur'ân also mentions that the Pharaoh's magicians died for their

1. See for a summary of similarities the *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1974 reprint, pp. 414-415.

2. Deuteronomy 32:48-52.

3. See for instance Q. 2:52-72; 7:144-145; 19:51-53, 57-73; 20:39-50; 21:48; 33:69; 37:114-122; 53:38 and 87:19.

4. Q. 20:85-86; 20:95-97.

5. Q. 18:60-62. The writer in the *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam* (p. 415) rightly says: "The story of Musa's accompanying a wise man on a journey seems without parallel."

6. Q. 40:26-45. The writer in the *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam,* thinking that some aspects of the story of Mûsâ originated in Haggada, writes: "The Kur'ânic story of a believer at the court of Pharaoh who wants to save Mûsâ is not clear." Yes; the comparison which the writer suggests, of course with a question mark, with the story of Jethro in Haggada is really *not clear.* The Qur'ânic account is quite distinctive, without any parallel in Haggada.

belief in God.[1]

Similarly with regard to the other Prophets the accounts of the Qur'ân differ fundamentally from those in the Bible. Some of the differences in the story of Ibrâhîm have been mentioned above. So far as Da'ûd and Solomon, two other great Prophets are concerned, the Bible in fact depicts them as tyrants, committing the most heinous crimes, indulging in pleasures and licentiousness and even snatching others' wives for illegal enjoyment![2] Prophet Lûṭ is even made to commit incest with his own daughters.[3] The Qur'ân, on the other hand, is singularly free from making any imputation of such frivolities to any of the Prophets. And so far as Dâ'ûd is concerned, he is represented as God's ideal servant on whom He bestowed kingdom, wisdom, scripture and power.[4] Similarly Solomon was favoured with the rare knowledge of the languages of birds and animals, in addition to power and kingdom.[5] Both are noble characters and God's Prophets.

Thus a comparison between the Biblical and Qur'ânic accounts of the Prophets makes it clear that the latter are not a reproduction of the former. There are of course points of similarity between the two sets of accounts; but the Qur'ân definitely presents a good deal different and original. Some of the orientalists do recognize that there are new elements in the Qur'ân. In general, however, their treatment of the subject suffers from three common drawbacks. In the first place, they seem to emphasize only the points of similarity almost to the exclusion of the points of dissimilarity or make only casual and secondary reference to them. Secondly, they spare no pains to identify similar facts or ideas in other ancient Greek, Hebrew and Latin works or legends and then immediately advance the suggestion that the Qur'ânic accounts are drawn from or based on them. It is overlooked that the mere existence of similar facts or ideas in a previous work, sometimes thousands of years old, does not *ipso fact* prove that a subsequent work is based on that work. Some further evidence is needed to show the contact or possibility of contact with, or understanding of thate source. This point is especially relevant in the case of Muḥammad (ﷺ); for it does not carry conviction just to suggest that he mastered the materials treasured in numerous

1. *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam, op. cit.*, 414-415.

2. For Da'ûd, Samuel II, 3:12-16; 4:4-5; 16:23; 18:33; and for Solomon see Kings I, 2:13-25, 28-35; 11:1-13.

3. Gen. 19:31-36.

4. Q. 6:88; 21:78-80; 34:10-11; 38:17-26.

5. Q. 2:102; 4:163; 6:84; 21:78-82; 27:15-44; 34:12-14; 38:30-40.

ancient works and sources, and that also in a multiplicity of foreign and even defunct languages, by means only of casual conversations with a trader in transit or a foreign slave in domestic service. For, that is the most that has hitherto been alleged about him. Nor is there any indication that Makka and its vicinity at that time possessed a good library or museum containing the ancient works and manuscripts to which the orientalists call their readers' attention; or that there were scholars and philologists in that place to unravel the secrets of such works to the Prophet-to-be. Thirdly, while casually recognizing that there are new elements in the Qur'ân, the orientalists do seem never to have paid attention to find out the sources of these elements. If they had done so, they would surely have found reason to see that the assumptions under which they have hitherto been labouring so diligently and impressively need revision.

Chapter XII
THE ALLEGED CONTEMPORARY ERRORS IN THE QUR'ÂN

The discrepancies and differences between the statements in the Qur'ân on the one hand and those in the prevailing versions of the Bible on the other in respect of the prophetic stories and other matters clearly militate against the theory of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) having allegedly drawn on and reproduced the Biblical materials. To sustain the theory, therefore, the orientalists have recourse to a two-fold plea, namely, that Muḥammad (ﷺ) did not himself read the Bible but derived his information about Judaism and Christianity from what he heard from others and that since his knowledge was thus only secondary, certain mistaken notions about these two systems prevailing at the time in certain quarters have crept into the Qur'ân. And as an extension of this latter plea it has lately been suggested, mainly by Watt, that not only some mistaken notions about these two systems but also the prevailing mistaken notions about the world and the universe have been reproduced in the Qur'ân.

The utter untenability of the original assumption that Muḥammad (ﷺ), and for that matter any reasonable person, would have proceeded to challenge the correctness of the two established religious systems on the basis of mere hear-say knowledge or that he would have ventured to formulate and promulgate a new religion on the authority of what his alleged private "informants" or "tutors" prompted to him, has been shown in the previous chapter. The present chapter deals with the remaining aspect of the orientalists' plea, namely, the supposed mistakes about Judaism and Christianity and the so-called scientific errors in the Qur'ân.

I. THE SUPPOSED MISTAKES ABOUT JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY

In dealing with this topic two things need to be borne in mind. In the first place, the Qur'ân does not really treat Judaism and Christianity as independent religions but as deviations from and corruption of the message delivered by God's Prophets. Hence there was no question of its stating what the modern Jews and Christians think to be the correct articles of their faiths. The Qur'ân is set to pointing out that what the Jews and Christians believed and practised at the time were errors and that their scriptures had been altered and manipulated to accommodate those errors and incorrect beliefs.

It also vigorously attempts to correct and rectify those errors. Secondly, it should also be borne in mind that what the modern Jews and Christians believe to be the correct doctrines of their faiths are not the same as those believed and practised by their predecessor Jews and Christians of the sixth and the seventh Christian century. Hence it is basically a wrong approach to say that the Qur'ân's descriptions of certain of the beliefs and practices of Judaism and Christianity are "palpably" false. For it is well-known that a number of "reforms" and modifications have been made in these faiths, particularly in Christianity, since the advent of Islam. The point would be clearer if it is noted that some serious Christian thinkers have lately advocated the abandonment of such doctrines as incarnation and divinty of Jesus,[1] the concept of the Holy Ghost as part of the Trinity,[2] etc. If any of these suggested reformulations of the doctrines of Christianity takes place, a future Christian scholar would as easily be able to say that the statement that "Christ is God incarnate" is a "palpably" false notion about Christianity!

That exactly is what Muir and others have done. Thus, while unjustly accusing the Qur'ân of having reproduced what they think mistakes and errors about Judaism and Christianity, they have not been able to avoid recognizing the fact that the alleged notions were those held by the contemporary followers of those faiths. Muir, for instance, places the blame squarely upon the "Catholics" and the Syrian Christians of the time; while Watt follows a cautious course and transfers the blame upon what he calls in his earlier work "nominally Christian Arabs".[3] In his latest work he further modifies the innuendo saying: "some people in Mecca wrongly supposed certain beliefs to be held by Jews and Christians" and that "these were beliefs held by the Meccans".[4] It must at once be noted that the beliefs and practices alluded to were not the suppositions of "some people in Mecca", nor were they beliefs held by "the Meccans" as such, but by the Meccan, Arab and Syrian Christians in general and that in pointing out those aspects of their beliefs the Qur'ân was not describing the tenets of Judaism and Christianity but was pointing out how the followers of those faiths had deviated from the original teachings of the Prophets.

1. J. Hicks, (ed.) *The Myth of God Incarnate*, London, 1977.
2. The protagonists of the Salvation Army advocate this.
3. Watt, *M. at M.*, 28.
4. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 2, 44, 55.

As regards the specific instances of the alleged mistakes it is said that the Qur'ân suggests that the Trinity "consists of Father, Son and virgin Mary"[1], that it asserts that the Jews regarded Ezra ('Uzayr) as son of God and that it denies that Jesus died on the cross.

(A) REGARDING THE TRINITY

It is to be noted that the Qur'ân does nowhere state that the Trinity consists of "Father", "Son" and "Virgin Mary". Indeed it was none of the Qur'ân's business to identify the entities or "Persons" that constituted the Trinity. It simply denounces the concept as antithetical to and subversive of true monotheism. It is the orientalists', more particularly Watt's own supposition that the Qur'ânic passage which refers to the Christians' worship of Mary and Jesus, besides God, "suggests that the Trinity consists", etc. In fact Watt modifies his earlier statement in his latest work where he refers to the Qur'ânic statement somewhat more accurately, saying that it gives the idea that "Christians took Jesus and Mary to be 'two gods apart from God'".[2] The passage in question runs as follows:

﴿ وإذ قال الله يـٰعيسى ابن مريم ءأنت قلت للناس اتخذونى وأمى إلـٰهين من دون الله قال سبحـٰنك ما يكون لى أن أقول ما ليس لى بحق... ﴾ (٥ : ١١٦)

"And when Allah will say: O Jesus, son of Mary, didst thou say to men, Take me and my mother for two gods besides Allah? He will say: Glory be to Thee! it was not for me to say what I had no right to (say)... "(Muḥammad Ali's translation)5:116.

Here the Qur'ân simply disapproves of the worship of Jesus and Mary, besides Allah and also exonerates Jesus from having so advised his followers. There is no allusion to the doctrine of the Trinity here. Significantly enough, where the Qur'ân alludes to the concept of the Trinity, as in 4:171 and 5:73, it does not identify the entities that are supposed to constitute the Trinity. In fact the Qur'ân treats the two subjects, the Trinity and the worship of human beings as gods or lords, as two distinct themes. This is very clear from 9:31 which disapproves of the Christains' and Jews' taking their monks and ascetics as "lords" apart from Allah. The passage runs as follows:

﴿ اتخذوا أحبارهم ورهبـٰنهم أربابا من دون الله والمسيح ابن مريم ومآ أمروا إلا ليعبدوا إلـٰها واحدا لا إلـٰه إلا هو سبحـٰنه عما يشركون ﴾

"They take their priests and anchorites as lords apart from Allah, and (also) the Messiah, son of Mary. Yet they were not commanded but to worship One God. There is

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, 28.
2. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 2, 45.

no god but He. Exalted is He from what they associate (with Him)." (9:31)

This passage is analogous to 5:119. Here again the worship of any other being besides Allah is condemned. There is a tradition which explains how the Christians and Jews treated their priests and monks as lords.[1] But apart from that question, no one would say on the basis of this passage (9:31) that the Qur'ân conceives of the Trinity to have been composed of the priests and the monks as one element, Jesus as another and God as the third!

That Jesus is taken for god by the Christians is an admitted fact. As regards the question of worship of Mary, it is a proven fact that not only the Christians of Arabia, but also many of them in the East and the West, particularly the Catholics, did and still do worship or adore her as possessing divine dignity. Watt ignores this fact presumably because it does not form part of the Protestant dogma. The point is ably explained by Muḥammad 'Alî who, in his note to the *'âyah* in question writes as follows:

"From the description of Mary being taken for a god by the Christians, some Christian critics of the Qur'ân conclude that the doctrine of the Trinity according to the Qur'ân consists of three persons — God, Jesus and Mary. But this is an absolutely unwarranted conclusion. Mary is no doubt spoken of as being taken for an object of worship by the Christians; but the doctrine of the Trinity is not mentioned here, while the divinity of Mary is not mentioned where the Trinity is spoken of. The doctrine and parctice of Mariolatry, as it is called by Protestant controversialists, is too well known. In the catechism of the Roman Church the following doctrines are to be found: 'That she is truly the mother of God, and the second Eve, by whose means we have received blessing and life; that she is the mother of Pity and very specially our advocate; that her images are of the utmost utility' (*Ency. Br.*, 11th ed., vol. 17, p. 813). It is also stated that her intercessions are directly appealed to in the Litany. And further, that there were certain women in Thrace, Scythia, and Arabia who were in the habit of worshipping the vrigin as a goddess, the offer of a cake being one of the features of their worship. 'From the time of the council of Ephesus (held in 431)', says the same writer, 'to exhibit figures of the virgin and child became the approved expression of orthodoxy..... Of the growth of the Marian cults, alike in the east and in the west, after the decision at Ephesus it would be impossible to trace the history.... Justinian in one of his laws bespeaks her advocacy for the Empire, and he inscribes the high altar in the new church of St. Sophia with her name. Narses looks to her directions on the field of battle. The Emperor Hera-

1. This tradition of 'Adiyy ibn Ḥâṭim is reported, among others, by Imâm Aḥmad and Tirmidhî. See Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr*, X, 112 and Ibn Kathîr *Tafsir*, IV, 77. See also *Tirmidhî* (ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shâkir), Vol. V, p. 278 (*ḥadîth* no. 3095).

cleus bears her image on his banner. John of Damascus speaks of her as the Sovereign lady to whom the whole creation has been made subject by her son. Peter Damain recognizes her as the most exalted of all creatures and apostrophizes her as deified and endowed with all power in heaven and in earth, yet not forgetful of our race.' The Christian world had in fact felt 'the need for a mediator to deal with the very mediator', and thus Mary was raised to the throne of Divinity along with Jesus. The recent proclamation of the Pope relating to the bodily assumption of Mary supports this conclusion, and will raise a new question for the Christian world whether Trinity really consists of God, Jesus and Mary."[1]

(B) REGARDING THE STATEMENT ABOUT 'UZAYR

As regards the Qur'ânic statement about the Jews' taking 'Uzayr as son of God (9:30), Watt castigates it as the "chief error in the Qur'ân in respect of Judaism" and asserts that "while it is true that the Old Testament uses the term 'son of God' for the Messiah who was expected, there is no evidence that it was ever applied to Ezra."[2]

Of course there is no evidence in the extant Old Testament about it; but the Qur'ân was not referring to what is written in the Old Testament about 'Uzayr but to the belief and assertion of some Jews of the time who regarded 'Uzayr as the son of God. In fact the *'âyah* in question starts with the expression: "And the Jews say" (وقالت اليهود). The commentator Al-Bayḍâwî, to whom Watt refers a number of times in his book,[3] makes it clear with reference to this *'âyah* that because the Old Testament was given its present form by 'Uzayr, many of the Jews considered him a "son of God" and that specially at Madina there was a group of Jews who held that belief. Al-Bayḍâwî further points out that the *'âyah* in question was read out and recited as usual but no Madinan Jew came forward with a contradiction.[4] It is to be noted that this *'âyah* is unanimously regarded as Madinan. Hence the silence of the Jews of the place on the matter is suggestive enough, particularly as they were avowed critics of the Prophet.

Not only Al-Bayḍâwî but also other commentators mention that the *'âyah* refers to the views of a particular group of the Jews. For instance Al-Ṭabarî gives a number of reports together with their narrators specifically men-

1. Muḥammad 'Alî, *The Holy Qur'ân Arabic Text, English Translation and Commentary*, revised edition, Lahore, 1985, pp. 275-276 (n. 751).
2. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 45.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 108, note 2 to Ch. 1 and notes 2 & 10 to Ch. III.
4. Al-Bayḍâwî, (*Tafsîr*), I., second Egytian impression, 1963, p. 412.

tioning the leading Jews of Madina who considered 'Uzayr a son of God. The most prominent of those Jews were Finḥâṣ, Sullâm ibn Miskham, Nu'mân ibn 'Awfa, Sha's ibn Qays and Mâlik ibn al-Ṣayf.[1] Similarly Al-Qurṭubî mentions the same fact and the same names adding that the expression "the Jews" occurring at the beginning of the *'âyah* means "some particular Jews", just as the expression "people told them" (قال لهم الناس) means not all the people of the world but some particular people. He further says that the Jewish sect who held that 'Uzayr was God's son had become extinct by his (Al-Qurṭubî's) time.[2]

Thus in respect of neither Mary nor 'Uzayr is the Qur'ânic statement an error or mistake. Nor could it be said that the Qur'ân was reproducing the popular and prevailaing errors and thus inveighing unjustly against Judaism and Christianity; for it refers to those beliefs as "errors" and points out the mistake in adhering to those errors. Hence if they did not really form part of the pristine religion of the Jews and the Christians, the Qur'ân was only emphasizing the truth.

Nor does the Qur'ân stop at pointing out those errors alone. It points out other errors too. Thus, (a) as against the Jews' insinuations and innuendo against Mary it unequivocally asserts her chastity and purity of character. (b) As against the doctrine of the Trinity it uncompromisingly asserts the absolute and immutable unity of God. (c) As against the Jews' and Christians' notion of sonship of God it emphatically states that God does not have any "son" nor is He "Father" to anyone as such. (d) As against the divinity of Christ it insists on his humanity and asserts that he was only a Prophet of God. Further, it says that those who worship him as god are "unbelievers". Interestingly enough, none of the orientalists has hitherto ventured to suggest that these Qur'ânic references to the prevailing beliefs of the Jews and Christians are also "palpable" mistakes due to its (the Qur'ân's) having adopted those "erroneous" notions from "nominally Christian Arabs", or "some people in Mecca", or "the Meccans"! The fact is that the Qur'ân refers to these latter beliefs of the Jews and Christans that prevailed at the time as well as to the other prevailing beliefs and practices regarding Mary and 'Uzayr and disapproves of each and every item of them.

The modern followers of the two religions have abandoned some of the

1. Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr*, XIV, 201-204.
2. Al-Qurṭubî, *Tafsîr*, Part VIII, 116-117.

old beliefs and practices and, on the basis of that reorientation, some of them now come forward with the suggestion that the Qur'ânic references to some of the beliefs and practices of Judaism and Christianity are palpable mistakes and that therefore Muḥammad (ﷺ) did not himself read the Bible but gathered his information from hearsay. The point at issue, however, is not whether he himself read the Bible or did not read it. The issue is that the Qur'ân, and therefore Muḥammad (ﷺ), denounce as errors the prevailing beliefs and practices of the Jews and Christians, including even those that are said to have been sanctioned by their holy scriptures. Not only that. The Qur'ân asserts that the extant Judaeo-Christian scripture is a corruption and modification of the original text.[1] Clearly the source of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) knowledge and conviction must have been something other than either a direct or an indirect acquaintance with the contents of the Bible.

(C) REGARDING CRUCIFIXION

Similarly in its reference to the end of Jesus's career the Qur'ân does in no way reproduce a popular "mistake". On the contrary it asserts that the popular saying (*qawluhum* قولهم) about it is a mistake. The *'âyah* which refers to the matter runs as follows:

﴿ وقولهم إنا قتلنا المسيح عيسى ابن مريم رسول الله وما قتلوه وما صلبوه ولكن شبه لهم وإن الذين اختلفوا فيه لفي شك منه ما لهم به من علم إلا اتباع الظنّ وما قتلوه يقينا ﴾ (٤ : ١٥٧)

"And as for their saying: We have killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah; but they killed him not, nor did they crucify him but it was made to appear to them as such. And certainly those who differ therein are in doubt about it. They have no knowledge about it, but only follow a conjecture, and they killed him not for certain." (4:157).

Clearly the passage sets out to contradict *their saying*, i.e. the saying of the Jews; for the whole narration here is about the Jews. The contradiction is made in a very positive manner. It is stated that they *did not kill him, nor did they really crucify him*. It is further stated that they, while claiming to have killed Jesus, themselves entertained doubts about it. The allusion is here to their doubts about the identity of the individual they put on the cross.[2] The passage then says that it was made to appear like that to them (شبه لهم) , i.e.,

1. See for a modern western scholar's recognition of this fact, Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament*, Oxford University Press, New York & Oxford, 1993.

2. See for instance Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr*, Pt. VI, 16-17.

Jesus's having been crucified and killed in that manner was an incorrect impression or illusion to them and that they had no real knewledge of what actually happened but followed only a certain conjecture. The passage ends with an emphatic reiteration that "they did not kill him for certain."

It may be noted that even some early Christian sects did not believe that Jesus died on the cross. Thus the Basilidans thought that some one else was substituted for him on the cross. The *Gospel of St. Barnabas* supports the theory of substitution on the cross. Another view, that of the Diocetae, says that Jesus had never had a real physical or natural body, but only an apparent or phantom one, and that his crucifixion was only apparent, not real. A yet another view, that of the Marcionite Gospel, says that Jesus was not even born but merely appeared in human form.

It cannot be said that in denying Jesus's cricifixion and death on the cross the Qur'ân adopts the view of any of the above mentioned Christian sects; for it categorically rejects the very basis of those views, namely, the divinity of Jesus and the theory of his phantom body. Rather, in view of the doubts and differences prevailing over the matter, it categorically asserts the truth and positively contradicts the Jews' assertion (وقولهم) that they had killed Jesus. The position is quite different from that of mere reproduction of a prevailing erroneous view. In fact, the Qur'ânic statement is directed against the Jews as well as the Christians. It contradicts the former's assertion that they had killed Jesus and that therefore he was not a Prophet because he suffered what is called an "accursed death". Similalry it rejects the Christian doctrine of the divinity of Jesus and that of "vicarious atonement" and its basis, the concept of "blood sacrifice".

The Qur'ânic statement that "they killed him not for certain" finds support even in the Bible itself. Thus:

(1) Jesus had prayed to God the night before his arrest to be saved from the accursed death on the cross (Mark 14:36; Matt. 26:39; Luke 22-44) and that his prayer was heard, i.e., responded to (He. 5:7). This means that he did not intend to die and that God did not allow his being subjected to the accursed death.

(2) There is nothing in the Gospels which may be taken to be an eyewitness account that the person crucified was dead when he was taken down from the cross or when he was placed in the sepulchre specially made for him.

(3) Pilate, who was in charge of the trial, appears to have grown skeptical about the justice of the whole proceedings and to have taken care to enable Jesus to escape death on the cross. The trial took place on Friday. Pilate purposely prolonged it and delivered judgement only three hours before sun-set, thus ensuring that Jesus could not be kept on the cross for more than a couple of hours at the most. For, with sun-set the Sabbath day would ensue and the condemned persons would have to be brought down from the crosses. Pilate also took additional care to see that Jesus was given wine or vinegar mingled with myrrh to render him less sensitive to pain. Thus Jesus remained on the cross for not more than three hours (Mark 15:25; John 19:14). This was evidently too short a time for any person of normal constitution to die on a cross. Significantly enough, the two other persons who were crucified simultaneously with Jesus are stated to have been alive when they were brought down from their crosses. Pilate himself did not believe that Jesus died in so short a time (Mark 15:44)

(4) After being taken down from the cross the two other men's legs were crushed, but this measure was dispensed with, according to the Bible, in the case of Jesus (John 19:32,33).

(5) Jesus, after being brought down from the cross, was pierced in the side of his body and blood rushed out of it (John 19:34), which shows that he was still alive.

(6) Pilate readily granted Joseph of Arimaethia's request and handed over Jesus's "body" to him. He lavished care on Jesus and put him in a special tomb hewn in the side of a rock (Mark 15:46); which was evidently a manoeuvre to deceive Jesus's enemies.

(7) On the third day the stone on the tomb's opening was found to have been removed (Mark 16:4), which proves that it had been removed previously, probably on the first or second day of the internment.

(8) Mary Magdalene, when she looked into the sepulchre, did not find Jesus there. She saw him standing and at first supposed "him to be the gardener". Then,

"17. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father, and Your Father; and to my God, and your God. 18. Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and *that* he had spoken these things unto her. 19. Then the same day at evening, being the first *day* of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and

stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you. 20. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them *his* hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord." (John 20:14-15,17-20)

(9) It was in the same body of flesh that the disciples saw Jesus, his wounds still deep enough for a man to thrust his hand in (John 20:25-28)

(10) He was seen in the same flesh and bone. He still felt hunger and ate food as his disciples did.

"36. And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them and saith unto them, peace *be* unto you. 37. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. 38. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? 39. Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. 40. And when he had thus spoken, he showed them *his* hands and *his* feet. 41. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them. Have ye here any meat? 42. And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. 43. And he took *it*, and did eat before them." (Luke 24:36-43)

(11) Jesus undertook a journey to Galilee where his disciples saw him (Matt. 28:10-17).

All these statements in the different Gospels strongly support the Qur'ânic verdict: "they killed him not for certain." Indeed the above mentioned Gospel statements clearly suggest that Jesus escaped death on the cross and therefore avoided being discovered by his enemies.

It is worth noting in this connection that recent research confirms that Jesus did not suffer death on the cross. Thus Barbara Thiering, an Australian scholar, has demonstrated convincingly, on a meticulous analysis of the Dead Sea Scrolls, that Jesus did not die on the cross.[1] Almost simultaneously two European scholars, Holger Kersten and Elmar E. Gruber, have assiduously pursued the story of the radiocarbon test carried out on the famous "Turin Shroud"[2] and have shown that Jesus did not die on the cross.[3] The end of Jesus is indeed a difficult historical and theological question; and

1. Barbara Thiering. *Jesus the man*, (first published 1993), Corgi edition, 1993. See especially the back-cover page.

2. The shroud discoverd at Turin and believed to be the garment with which Jesus was covered when placed in the sepulchre.

3. Holger Kersten & Elmar R. Gruber. *The Jesus Conspiracy The Turin Shroud and the Truth about the Resurrection*, Element Books Ltd, Shaftesbury, 1994.

it would just not be appropriate to cut it short, as Watt does,[1] by calling the Qur'ânic statement on it a popular error picked up from the bazaar gossips of Makka or Bosra.

II. THE ALLEGED SCIENTIFIC ERRORS

As an extension of the plea about errors in respect of Judaism and Christianity Watt has lately suggested that the Qur'ân also reproduces the contemporary errors about the nature of the earth and the sky. The Qur'ân, he says, addresses its first audience, the Arabs, in terms of their own world-picture and thus reproduces even points in which that picture was mistaken. In support of this statement he reproduces, in translation, some eight Qur'ânic passages and says that they show that the prevailing notions of the earth being a flat space and the sky being a solid structure, "presumably of stone", are reproduced in the Qur'ân.[2] Watt recognizes that different words are used in these passages to describe the earth and says that "all would be interpreted by the hearers in terms of their belief that the earth is flat." He adds that "there is no sepcial emphasis on flatness, since no one supposed that the earth would be otherwise."[3] He also suggests that such reproduction of contemporary errors was only natural, for, according to him, "it was not essential for god's purpose that false ideas of this sort should be corrected", "since the Qur'ânic message could be communicated to them [the Arabs] without correcting these beliefs."[4]

Before proceeding to take into account the passages cited by Watt in support of his assumption it is necessary to note the implications of his last mentioned statement about the supposed compatibility of God's purpose with the continuance of the prevailing scientific errors in the Qur'ân. In Making this statement Watt appears to reflect the modern Christian's attitude to his own sacred scripture. This attitude is an outcome of a growing awareness since the nineteenth century of the existence of a number of scientific inaccuracies in the Biblical texts. In view of these inaccuracies the opinion first gained ground that there was an antagonism between science and religion. Gradually, however, the notion of a text of revelation communicated by God gave way to the notion of a text "inspired" by God but written down

1. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 45-46.
2. *Ibid.*, 5-6.
3. *Ibid.*, 5.
4. *Ibid.*, 2, 44.

by human beings. The Biblical authors, it came to be assumed, might have introduced inaccuracies to the text arising from the language of the day or from ideas and traditions still honoured and prevalent at the time; but that did not detract from their being divinely inspired.[1] "The scientific errors in the Bible", states an eminent modern Christian thinker, "are the errors of mankind, for long ago man was like a child, as yet ignorant of science."[2]

The modern Muslim, however, is neither in need of nor prepared for finding solace in such assumptions; for there is no discrepancy between scientific data and any of the Qur'ânic statements. As will be shown presently, the interpretations put by Watt on the passages he cites are totally wrong. And it is surprising that in advancing his assumption he has not taken into account, not to speak of a number of Arabic works on the subject,[3] even such a best-seller in Europe as M. Bucaille's *La Bible, Le Coran et la Science* which, appearing for the first time in 1976, had run into 12 editions within ten years[4] and had been translated into at least three other European languages including English and seven Asian languages before Watt penned his above mentioned statement.

(A) REGARDING THE EARTH'S SHAPE

As indicated above, in citing the passages in support of his asumption Watt recognizes that different words are used in them to describe the earth and that "there is no special emphasis on flatness"; but he says that all the expressions "would be interpreted by the hearers in terms of their belief that the earth is flat", for "no one supposed that the earth would be otherwise." This is really an indirect admission that the material expressions in the passages cited could be given the alleged meaning only if approached with a fixed notion or preconception that the earth is flat. Conversely, if there is no such preconception and if the expressions are approached with an unprejudiced mind, it would be seen, in Watt's own words, that "there is no special emphasis on flatness" of the earth as a whole. Also, a logical corollary of

1. The second Vatican Council (1962-1965) adopted a document which recognizes that the Books of the Old Testament contain material that is imperfect and obsolete. See M. Bucaille, *What is the Origin of Man? The Answers of Science and the Holy Scriptures*, 4th ed. Seghers, Paris, 1988, p. 15.

2. Jean Guitton (1978), quoted in *ibid.*, 10.

3. For instance Muḥammad Wafâ al-'Amîrî, *Al-'Ishârât al-'Ilmiyyah Fî al-Qur'ân*, second impression, Cairo, 1401 (1981) and Ḥanafi Aḥmad, *Al-Tafsîr al-'Ilmi li al-'Âyât al-Kawniyyah Fî al-Qur'ân*, Cairo, n.d.

4. The 13th edition was published in Paris in 1987.

Watt's premise is that a modern man would be no less justified in approaching and understanding the passages in terms of his scientific knowledge. If this is done, and it should be done, it will be found that the passages cited by Watt are full of unprecedented scientific significance not only with regard to the earth but also regading other matters.

The word *'arḍ* occurs in the Qur'ân some 461 times. Most of these uses are in connection with a description of God's absolute dominion over the entire universe and His power of creation. At a number of places the word clearly comes in the sense of country or dominion;[1] while at other places it is used metaphorically to denote worldly life.[2] The passages wherein it occurs with any description of its shape and nature may be divided into two categories. In one category it is mentioned in combination with or in comparison to the mountains and rivers. Here the emphasis is on how the earth has been made suitable and useful for man and other creatures. Here the listeners' or readers' attention is drawn mainly to the objects of nature and the land surface falling within his immediate view. In other words the *earth* in these passages means the land or land-surface falling within an observer's immediate view, in contradistinction to the mountains and rivers, rather than the entire earth as a unit. In the second category of passages the word occurs in relation to the sun, the moon, the skies and the universe in general. Here the *earth* is spoken of as a unit and the description really gives an insight into its shape, position and even movement in sapce.

In view of this general nature of the Qur'ânic use of the expression *'arḍ* Watt's treatment of the subject is partial and faulty in three main respects. In the first place, he concentrates on the passages of the first category and takes them to refer to the shape of the earth as a unit, which is not the case. Secondly, despite the diveresity and diffrences in the descriptive expressions in the passages he cites he imposes on them all identical meanings because, as he says, the "first audience" of the Qur'ân could not have supposed that the earth's shape could have been otherwise than flat. A really objective approach would have suggested greater care in understanding the precise implications of the different expressions employed in the passages. Watt even neglects to note the significance of a passage in its entirety, omitting its material part from his translation. Thirdly and more importantly, he does not

1. For instance in Q. 7:110; 14:13; 20:57; 20:63; 26:35; 28:57.
2. As in Q. 9:38.

at all take into consideration the second category of passages wherein the shape and position of the earth as a unit, as also those of the other planets and stars in the space are indicated and which contain astounding scientific data not known to man at that time.

That the term *'arḍ* used in most of the passages cited means the land surface falling within the observer's immediate view, rather than the earth as a planet, is very clear from 88:19-20 and 78:6-7 which Watt cites. The two passages run as follows:

﴿وإلى الجبال كيف نصبت * وإلى الأرض كيف سطحت﴾ (٨٨: ٢٠-١٩)

"And [to] the mountains how they are set up? and [to] the earth how it is spread out?" (Watt's tanslation) 88:19-20.

﴿ألم نجعل الأرض مهـٰـدًا * والجبال أوتادًا﴾ (٧٨: ٧- ٦)

"Did we not make the earth an expanse and the mountains pegs?" (Watt's translation) 78:6-7.

Clearly, at both the places *'arḍ* means the immediately visible plain land in contradistinction to the "the mountains". For, if the earth as a whole is implied, the reference to the mountains, distinct from it would be both incongruous and superflous here.

Let us consider the material words used in relation to *'ard* in all the passages cited. They are mentioned below together with Watt's rendering of them.

79:30 - والأرض بعد ذٰلك دحـٰـهـا (*daḥâhâ*) "spread out"

88:20 - وإلى الأرض كيف سطحت (*suṭiḥat*) "spread out"

78:6 - ألم نجعل الأرض مهـٰـدا (*mihâda*) "make an expanse".

51:48 - والأرض فرشنـٰـها (*farashnâha*) "laid flat".

71:19 - والله جعل لكم الأرض بساطا (*bisaṭâ*) "made an expanse".

20:53 - الذى جعل لكم الأرض مَهدا (*mahdâ*) "made a bed".

13:3 - وهو الذى مد الأرض (*madda*) "spread out".

2:22 - الذى جعل لكم الأرض فراشا (*firâshâ*) "made a carpet".

Needless to say, each one of the expressions like *daḥâhâ*, *suṭiḥat*, etc., admits of a variety of meanings. Watt himself admits this fact in a general way not only with reference to these passages but also with regard to the others he has quoted by saying at the outset of his work that he has so selected the translation as "best brings out the points being illustrated by the

quotations."[1]

Now, the very first expression in the series *daḥâhâ*, is noticeably distinctive and different in genre from the rest. Watt, following many other previous translators, renders it as "spread out". But the exact and correct meaning of the term, keeping in view its root, rather provides a very positive Qur'ânic evidence in support of the spherical shape of the earth. For *daḥâ* means to "shape like an egg", its noun being *daḥiyah*, which the Arabs still use to mean an egg.[2]

The second expression, *suṭiḥat*, is equally significant. It is derived from *saṭḥ* (سطح) which means surface, outer layer, outer cover, roof, deck, plane, etc. Hence *saṭḥ al-baḥr* (سطح البحر) means sea-level, *saṭḥ mâ'il* (سطح مائل) means inclined plane, *saṭḥy* (سطحي) means external, outward, supercficial, etc. Keeping these original meaning of the root-word in view and approaching the Qur'ânic statement at 88:20 with our modern knowledge that the interior of the earth is full of gaseous and liquid materials (lava) and that the land surface is only an outer cover resembling the skin of an egg, and that it is also a plane, it would be seen how very appropriate, scientific and significant is the term *suṭiḥat* used here in describing the land-surface of the earth, particularly after the description in the previous *'âyah* (88:19) of how the mountains have been set up. The Qur'ânic statement at 88:20 may thus be more appropriately and more accurately rendered as: "(Do they not look) to the earth how it hase been surfaced and planed?"

The third word in the series is *mihâd* (مهاداً) and it may be considered along with the sixth in the series, *mahd* (مهد in 20:53) because they both belong to the same root. The former means resting place, abode, bosom, cradle and, figuratively, fold (in which something rests). And A.J.Arberry has very correctly translated the expression at 78:6 as "Have We not made the earth as a cradle?"[3] In fact this very word *mihâd* occurs at six other places in the Qur'ân,[4] and at each of these places it clearly bears the meaning of an abode, a habitat, a resting place, etc. In any case, even without regard to what we know of the interior of the earth, to translate the expression as

1. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 2.

2. M. Fatḥî 'Uthmân, "Al-'arḍ fî al-Qur'ân al-Karîm", *Proceedings of the First Islamic Geographical Conference*, Riyadh, 1404 / 1984, Vol. IV, 127 (117-271); A.M. Soliman, *Scientific Trends in the Qur'ân*, London (Tâ-ha Publications), 1985, p. 16.

3. A.J. Arberry, *op. cit.*, 626.

4. Q. 2:206; 3:12; 3:197; 7:41; 13:18 and 38:56.

"made an expanse" would be quite remote from the original sense and would be inappropriate here.

Similarly *mahd* means bed or cradle. It occurs at four other places in the Qur'ân, once in connection with *'arḍ* (43:10) and thrice in connection with Jesus's speaking to men even while in the cradle.[1] And again, A.J.Arberry very consistently renders the term at both 43:10 and 20:53 as cradle. In fact he translates the statements at both the places uniformly as "He who appointed the earth to be a cradle for you."[2] Watt, on the other hand, is not so consistent. He translates the expression at 78:6 as "make an expanse" and at 20:53 as "made a bed".

Similarly inconsistent is his translations of the fourth and eighth terms in the series, *farashnâhâ* (فرشناها) and *firâsha* (فراشا). The primary meaning of *farasha* (فرش) is to spread out as a bed, to pave, to cover, etc.; while *firâsh* means bed, mattress, bedspread, cushion, carpet, etc. Nevertheless, while Watt has translated this last expression at 2:22 as "made a bed", he has rendered the word at 51:48 as "laid flat", though the farthest manoeuvring that could legitimately be done here is to render it as "spread out as a bed" or "laid out as a bed", but not quite as "laid flat".

There remain two other words to consider, *bisâṭ* (بساط) and *madda* (مدّ), the fifth and seventh respectively in the series. The same meaning of laying or spreading as a bed is appropriate for *bisâṭ*; and Arberry has indeed translated the whole statement at 71:19 as "And God has laid the earth for you as a carpet."[3] Watt, however, has rendered the expression as "made an expanse". As regards the expression *madda*, its primary meaning is "he extended" or "he expanded". It may even mean he "spread out", as Watt translates it. The word has been used in the Qur'ân in several other senses. At 84:3-4 the expression in its passive form *muddat* clearly bears the meaning of "is flattened" — "And when the earth is flattened and it throws off what is in it and gets emptied" ﴿وإذا الأرض مُدت * وألقت ما فيها وتخلت﴾. This is a description of what will happen when the earth (world) is brought to an end and the resurrection takes place. Hence the sense in which *muddat* is used here cannot be applied to the same term or its derivatives which speak about the normal situations of the earth and which therefore must bear a meaning

1. Q. 3:40; 3:110 and 19:29.
2. A.J. Arberry, *op. cit.*, 505 and 314.
3. *Ibid.*, 609.

other than "made flat". Conversely, this passage is an indirect pointer to the fact that prior to the event of the end of its existence the earth *as a whole* is not flat.

Leaving aside the differentials in meanings and accepting the renderings as "spread out", "made an expanse", etc., none of the eight statements cited does really say that the earth as a whole is a flat space, for the passages speake of the earth or land as it comes within the immediate view of an observer. Moreover, though the sense of making level or plane may be said to be common to all the terms, this sense does not in fact run counter to the spherical nature of the earth. The accepted geometrical and mathematical definition of "plane" is "surface such that the straight line joining any points on it is touching on all points."[1] Hence, inspite of the earth as a whole being spherical, its surface is nonetheless level, plane, spread out or even flat.

The inherent relativity of the expression *madda* or "spread out" applied to earth in such passages was indeed pointed out some eight centuries ago by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn al-Râzî (544-606 H. / 1150-1210 A. C.) who was quite conscious of the spherical nature of the earth. Referring to the term *madda* used at 13:3 and 15:19 he makes two points. He says that the object of these passages is to bring home the theme of the existence of the Creator. The reference therefore has to be to such objects as are visible and obvious to the listener. Hence the term *'arḍ* in these passages has to be understood in the sense of the part of it which comes to the immediate view of the observer.[2] Secondly, he points out that the earth "is an extremely large ball; but a part of a gigantic ball, when looked at it, you will see it as a plain surface. This being the case, the difficuly of which they speak ceases to exist. The proof of this [explanation] is the saying of Allah: '(We have set) the mountains as pegs ﴿والجبال أوتادا﴾'. He calls them pegs notwithstanding the fact that there may be extensive plain surfaces on top of them. So is the case here."[3]

Far from reproducing or reflecting the erroneous world-view prevailing in seventh century Arabia the Qur'ân indeed goes beyond the scientific knowledge of the time and speaks of scientific facts and truths that have

1. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, ed. A.S. Hornby, 19th impression. 1984, p. 636.

2. *Al-Tafsir al-Kabir*, XIX, p. 3.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 170. The text runs as follows:

(فهي كرة في غاية العظمة، والكرة العظيمة يكون كل قطعة منها، إذا نظر إليها فإنها ترى كالسطح المستوي، وإذا كان كذلك زال ما ذكروه من الإشكال، والدليل عليه قوله تعالى: ﴿والجبال أوتادا﴾ سماها أوتادا مع أنه قد يحصل عليها سطوح عظيمة مستوية، فكذلك هنا)

only recently been discovered by man. In fact if Watt had looked carefully enough he would have seen that at least in three of the passages he has cited to support his assumption there are such extraordinary facts as well as significant pointers to the spherical nature of the earth. Unfortunately, while quoting these passages in translation he has omitted in two of these three passages those very portions that contain such facts. One of these passages is 13:3 which in its entirety runs as follows:

﴿وهو الذى مد الأرض وجعل فيها رواسى وأنهـٰـرا ومن كل الثمرات جعل فيها زوجين اثنين يغشى اليل النهار إن فى ذٰلك لأيـٰـت لقوم يتفكرون﴾

"And He it is Who spread the earth, and made in it firm mountains and rivers. And of all fruits He has made pairs of two (of every kind). He makes the night cover the day. Surely there are signs in this for a people who reflect." (Muhammad Ali's translation with slight alteration)

In this passage there are two significant statements. The first is: "And of all fruits He has made pairs, two (of every kind)." The implication of this statement has become clear only in modern times with the discovery of sexes in plants and fruits, indeed of pairs in every thing.[1] In fact the statement has long been translated in that sense.[2] Needless to say that no one in the seventh Christian century did have any inkling of the concept of pairs or sexes in plants, fruits and other things; nor was it possible to comprehend the full import of this Qur'ânic statement before the scientific discoveries of modern times in this respect.

The second significant statement in the passage (13:3) is: "He makes the night cover the day." Unmistakably, the sense here is that of the night gradually taking the place of the day — a phenomenon which is understandable only with reference to the spherical shape of the earth and its rotation.[3] For, if it was uttered in the context of a flat earth, the statement would have been in the sense of the day and night alternating each other, not "covering the day with the night", as indeed Arberry translates it.[4]

The second passage is 20:53 which runs as follows:

﴿الذى جعل لكم الأرض مهداً وسلك لكم فيها سبلا وأنزل من السماء ماءً فاخرجنا به أزوٰجًا من نبات شتّىٰ﴾

1. See also Q. 36:36 and 51:49 on this point.

2. See for instance. M. Pickthall's and A. Yusuf Ali's translations and comments on this *'âyah.*

3. See below for other Qur'ânic references on this point.

4. Arberry, *op. cit.*, 239.

"He Who made the earth a cradle for you and threaded for you in it routes; and sent down from the sky water. Thus have We produced thereby pairs of plants, each different from the other."

The scientific truth about sexes in plants is stated here more pointedly and explicitly, thus supplementing the information contained in 13:3 noted above.

The third of the passages is 51:47-48. It runs as follows:

﴿والسماء بنينـٰـها بأييـد وإنا لموسعون * والأرض فرشنـٰـها فنعم المـٰـهدون﴾

"And the sky We have made it with Hands; and verily We are the expanders (are in the process of expanding it). And the earth, We have laid it out, and how Excellent are the authors of laying out!"

Here the expression "and verily We are expanders" ﴿وإنا لموسعون﴾ is very significant. Watt has rendered this part of the statement as: "and it is we who make it of vast extent."[1] But it is to be noted that the construction is in the nominative form in contrast with the verbal form of the immediately preceding expression, which is also in the past tense. It is a well-known rule of Arabic construction that the nominative form (اسمية) together with the emphatic *lâm* (ل) is used to indicate a habitual or continual act or process of doing. Thus the correct translation of the expression would be: "And verily We are expanders" or "We do expand" or "We are in the process of expanding it". Indeed A.J. Arberry is just correct in rendering this part of the statement as "and We extend it wide."[2]

Now, this statement assumes a great significance in the light of modern scientific information that the universe is expanding at a staggering speed. It says that everything in space (the skies) — the constellations together with their planets and satellites, etc., are all flying straight ahead at an unimaginable speed. The sun itself, together with its planets and their satellites as a whole are reckoned to be moving at the staggering speed of almost a million miles a day towards the constellation Lyra which itself is moving away at a similar speed! Thus the space, i.e. the sky (السماء) is continually expanding. In the light of this modern knowledge the Qur'ânic statement "We have created the heaven, and indeed We do expand it" assumes a bewildering significance, besides being surprisingly precise.

1. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 6.
2. A.J. Arberry, *op. cit.*, 545.

Thus three of the eight passages cited by Watt to prove what he supposes to be scientific errors in the Qur'ân contain at least three such facts as run directly counter to his assumption. These facts are: (a) that God has shaped the earth like an egg (دحـٰـها 79:30) and that "He makes the night cover the day" (13:3), which is a further indication of the spherical nature of the earth; (b) that plants and fruits, besides other objects, are created in pairs (of sexes) (13:3) and (c) that the sky (space) is continually expanding (51:47). There are indeed many other passages of scientific import in the Qur'ân, specially relating to the origin and creation of man, nature and the universe.[1] It is not feasible here to refer even briefly to all of them. A few of them bearing on the question of the earth's shape may, however, be mentioned here.

The most significant in this respect is the statement at 91:6 which says that the earth has been thrown (in its orbit? in the space?) like a ball. The statement runs as follows: ﴿والأرض وما طحـٰـها﴾ "By the earth, and He Who threw it (like a ball)." It may be noted that like the word *daḥâhâ* (79:30) this word *ṭaḥâhâ* also has been rendered by many early scholars as "spread out" "expanded", etc. Significantly, however, both Al-Qurṭubî and Al-Shawkânî, while noticing the interpretations put on the word by the previous commentators, point out that the Arabs understood the word in the sense of going or moving away.[2] The meaning is further clarified by the author of the *Tâj al-'Arûs*, who, while noticing the meanings put on the word by the early commentators, points out that the word means "throwing" something, for instance a ball (وطحا بالكرة رمى بها).[3] This expression thus agrees well with the meaning of *daḥâhâ* as explained above and both indicate the spherical shape of the earth and its rotation in the space. It may further be noted that the statements immediately preceding 91:6, particularly 91:3-4, have a significant bearing on the point as they describe the relationship of day and night with the sun. The statements run as: ﴿والنهار إذا جلـٰـها * واليل إذا يغشـٰـها﴾ "By the day as it reveals it (the sun). By the night as it conceals it." These two statements make it quite clear that it is the action of the day and the night which brings to view the sun and conceals it, not that any movement of the sun causes day and night. The precision in the statements would be all

1. See for instance M. Bucaille, *op. cit.*
2. Al-Qurṭubî, *Tafsîr*, XX, 74-75; Al-Shawkânî, *Tafsîr*, V, 449.
3. *Tâj al-'Arûs*, X, 223. See also E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English lexicon*, under طحو and طحى where, besides the other meanings, it is noted: "طحا is said when one throws down a man upon his face" (Cambridge Islamic Texts Society print, 1984, Vol. II, p. 1832).

the more clear if attention is paid to 91:1 wherein the sun is referred to. It simply states: "By the sun and its brightness" ﴿والشمس وضحىها﴾. No action or verb is ascribed to it here. A little regard to such precise use of words would make it clear that they imply important scientific facts regarding the shape of the earth and its rotation.

The significance of the earth having been "thrown" (*ṭaḥâhâ*) becomes all the more clear if it is considered along with another very important Qur'ânic statement relating to the orign of the earth itself and of life on it. It says that initially the sky and the earth were joined together in one mass, that subsequently they were separated and that every living being on the earth originated in water. The passage runs as :

﴿أولم يرَ الذين كفروا أن السمـٰوٰت والأرض كانتا رتقا ففتقنـٰهما وجعلنا من الماء كل شىء حىّ أفلا يؤمنون﴾ (٢١ : ٣٠)

"Or, do the unblievers not see that the heavens and the earth were joined in one mass, and then We clove them asunder, and made out of water every living being? Will they not then believe?" (21:30).

The significance of this passage has become clear only with the progress of scientific knowledge in modern times about the origin of our planet and of life on it. Another Qur'ânic statement directly relating to the earth is 13:41 which says that it is gradually contracting, as is indeed established by modern research. The statement runs as follows:

﴿أولم يروا أنا نأتي الأرض ننقصها من أطرافها . . . ﴾ (١٣ : ٤١)

"Have they not realized that We bring the earth to contraction in its extremities?" (13:41)

As regards the night gradually merging into the day and vice-versa we have a number of other Qur'ânic statements of which the following are very specific.

(a) ﴿تولج اليل فى النهار وتولج النهار فى اليل﴾ (٣ : ٢٧)

"Thou causest the night to enter into the day and Thou causest the day to enter into the night." (3:27)

(b) ﴿ذٰلك بأن الله يولج اليل فى النهار ويولج النهار فى اليل﴾ (٢٢ : ٦١)

"That is because Allah makes the night enter into the day and makes the day enter into the night." (22:61)

(c) ﴿ألم تر أن الله يولج اليل فى النهار ويولج النهار فى اليل﴾ (٣١ : ٢٩)

"Do you not see that Allah makes the night enter into the day and makes the day

enter into the night?" (31:29)

(d) and (e) ﴿يولج اليل فى النهار ويولج النهار فى اليل﴾

"He makes the night enter into the day and makes the day enter into the night." (35:13 & 57:6)

(f) ﴿وءاية لهم اليل نسلخ منه النهار﴾ (٣٦ : ٣٧)

"And a sign for them is the night. We gradually withdraw from it the day." (36:37)

These repeated statements of the Qur'ân about the gradual merging of the day and the night into each other, and not each appearing suddenly on the surface of the earth as would have been the case if it were flat, are clear pointers to the spherical shape of the earth. Still clearer, however, is :

﴿يكوّر اليل على النهار ويكوّر النهار على اليل...﴾ (٣٩ : ٥)

"He makes the night roll round the day and He makes the day roll round the night." (39:5)

It is to be emphasized that the word *kawwara* (whence *yukawwiru*) means to roll into a ball or to make round. In other words, the *'âyah* says that the night and the day are a continuous process *round* the earth.

(B) CONCERNING THE SKY

The Qur'ân refers not only to the earth and to what it produces by Allah's leave, it also draws man's attention to the skies and the universe in order to bring home to him the theme of His Existence and Omnipotence. And in so doing it makes statements of which the full significance and meaning are unfolding themsleves only with the progress of our scientific knowledge. But as in the case of the earth, so in respect of the sky Watt states that the Qur'ân only picks up the prevailing erroneous notion and conceives the sky to be something built of solid materials, "presumably of stone."[1] He bases his assertion on four out of the eight Qur'ânic passages he cites in connection with what he imagines scientific errors in the Qur'ân. These passages, together with his translation of them, are as follows:

(a) 79:27-28 = ﴿ءأنتم أشد خلقا أم السماء بنـها * رفع سمكها فسوـها﴾

"Are you harder to create or the heaven he built? He raised up its roof and ordered it."

(b) 88:17-18 = ﴿أفلا ينظرون إلى الإبل كيف خلقت * وإلى السماء كيف رفعت﴾

"Will they not regard the camels, how they are formed? and the heaven how it is raised?"

1. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 5.

(c) 51:47 = ﴿والسماء بنينـــها بأييد وإنا لموسعون﴾

"The heaven we have built with hands, and it is we who make it of vast extent..."

(d) 2:22 = ﴿الذى جعل لكم الأرض فرٰشا والسماء بناء...﴾

"(your lord) made for you the earth a carpet and the heaven an edifice..."

In the above quoted passages there occur the expressions *banâhâ* (بنـــها), *banaynâhâ* (بنينـــها) and *binâ'* (بناء) respectively in (a), (c) and (d). Understandably Watt has so translated them as would best illustrate the point he wants to make. But even accepting his rendering of the terms, it may be pointed out that the words "build" and "edifice" are not exclusively used in respect of solid objects. They may very well be applied to non-solids as well as to abstract ideas and objects. At any rate, his translation of the expression *wa'innâ la-mûsi'ûn* (وإنا لموسعون) as "and we make it of vast extent" is clearly misleading. The exact meaning of the expression, as pointed out earlier, is: "And We do expand it / or are in the process of expanding it."

Now, knowing as we do at the present time that just as an atom is a "structure" or "ecifice" "built" of certain elements, similarly the whole universe and its component parts, the innumerable systems (like the solar system) as a whole and each individually are very much a structure, a set-up, an integrated construction, an organism or, figuratively, even an "edifice." Hence the terms "built", "created", "formed" etc., may appropriately be applied to them, especially to the solar system, to which the earth and the neighbouring planets belong. The question is really how one sees it, as Watt himself seems to recognize. The trems by themselves do not mean that the Qur'ân conceives the sky to be something of a solid object.

Similarly the term *samk* (سمك) in (c), which Watt translates as "roof", has other meanings as well as height, expansiveness, extensivenss and *burj* or zone of constellation.[1] Of course the Qur'ân does in other places refer to the sky as "the raised roof" (52:5 = والسقف المرفوع) and a "protected roof" (21:32 = سقفا محفوظا). The word *saqf* in Arabic originally means a cover or a roof over anything. The term is therefore appropriately applicable to the immediate sphere around our atmospheric belt, or the latter itself, for both of them are very much "protected" and protecting covers over us, the earth.

Apart from these four passages, however, there, are many other statements in the Qur'ân which Watt does not take into account but which show

1. See *Lisân al-'Arab* under *samk* and *Tâj al-'Arûs*, VII, 145.

that its view of the sky is not so primitive as he thinks it to be. These other passages may be classified into three broad categories — (a) those that speak about the state of the sky at the beginning of the creation, (b) those that give an idea of the nature and contents of the sky or skies as they are now and (c) those that speak about their state in the end.

As regards the state of the sky at the beginning of the creation, two passages are of special significance. The one, 41:11, says that at the beginning the sky was only "smoke" (or vaporous or gaseous).[1] The other, 21:30, states that the skies and the earth were initially one mass but they were subsequently cloven asunder.[2] Modern scientists have different theories about the origin of the universe. Neither is the present writer competent to speak on the subject, nor is the present work a suitable place for a discussion on it. Speaking in general as a lay man, however, two statements may safely be made in this connection. First, the various modern theories about the origin of the universe seem only to approximate the position stated so clearly in the Qur'ân. Second, these Qur'ânic statements go inconceivably beyond the notion about the sky prevalent in the sixth-seventh century world.

The passages speaking about the nature and contents of the sky are more numerous. The most striking point in these passages is the plural from *al-samâwât* (السمـٰوٰت) which occurs some 190 times in the Qur'ân, while in its singular form (السماء) it comes some 120 times. More interestingly, at least at nine places the Qur'ân specifically mentions that there are "seven skies",[3] one adjoining and corresponding to the other (*ṭibâqâ* طباقا), or "in layers".[4] It is now a generally accepted view with the scientists that the universe consists of several staggeringly expansive spaces, some enumerating exactly seven, each corresponding to and adjoining the other and each with its own constellations and meteors! The "skies" or the 'Seven skies" spoken of in the Qur'ân for about 200 times thus appear to assume a new significance and meaning in the light of this modern knowledge. For one thing, no person in the seventh century looking at the sky with bare eyes and imagining it to be something of a solid structure would venture to say so categorically and

1. The text is: ﴿... ثم استوىٰ إلى السماء وهي دخان...﴾
2. The text is: ﴿... أن السمـٰوٰت والأرض كانتا رتقا ففتقنـٰهما...﴾
3. Q. 2:29; 17:44; 23:17; 23:86; 41:12; 65:12; 67:3; 71:15; 78:12.
4. Q. 67:3 and 71:15. The term *ṭibâqâ* (طباقا), though often translated as "one above the other", more correctly means "in layers" or "corresponding to one another". See Lane's *Lexicon*.

repeatedly that there are seven such structures, one above or beside the other. Nor was one in need of indulging in such unusual and, in the Prophet's case, a definitely hazardous statement. In this respect too the Qur'ân goes far beyond the seventh century notion about the sky.[1]

Equally significant are the statements about how the skies and the objects therein are held in their respective positions. It is very clearly mentioned that while "raising" the sky Allah also set the "balance".[2] It is also mentioned that the sky is not such a structure as is rested on visible pillars.[3] Most important of all, it is stated that the skies (السموات) and the earth are sustained by Allah's will. The statement runs as follows:

﴿إن الله يمسك السمٰوٰت والأرض أن تزولا ولئن زالتا إن أمسكهما من أحد من بعده...﴾ (٣٥:٤١)

"Verily Allah holds the heavens and the earth, lest they should cease to be there; and if they ceased to be there, there is none except He Who could hold them." (35:41)

The expression "holding" in respect of the "skies" as well as the earth is very significant. It means that neither is the earth rested on something "solid" nor are the skies so. In other words, the passage says that they are held in their respective positions without solid supports, that is in space, by Allah's will and design.

A third and bewildering fact mentioned about the sky, as mentioned earlier,[4] is that it is in the process of continuous expansion. Modern scientific knowledge is surprisingly in line with this statement of the Qur'ân. It may further be noted in this connection that the Qur'ân also describes the seven skies as "seven ways" or tracks. Thus 23:17 states:

﴿ولقد خلقنا فوقكم سبع طرائق وما كنا عن الخلق غٰفلين﴾

"And We created above you seven ways, and We are not unmindful of creation."

The full significance of such statements in the Qur'ân may be understood only in the light of modern scientific knowledge about the movement of the heavenly bodies.

Another significant fact about the skies mentioned in the Qur'an is that there are living beings in them, and not simply on this our planet, the earth. Thus 42:29 very distinctly states:

1. Watt quickly passes over this fact by saying: "There is also mention of seven heavens." (*Muḥammad's Mecca*, 5.)

2. Q. 55:7 = ﴿والسماء رفعها ووضع الميزان﴾

3. Q. 13:2 and 31:10.

4. *Supra*, p. 313. See also Q. 51:47.

﴿ومن آيـٰته خلق السمـٰوٰت والأرض وما بث فيهما من دابة...﴾

"And of His signs is the creation of the skies and the earth and what He has spread forth in both of them of living beings."

There are other passages too that give the same impression.[1]

Finally, of these seven skies, the nearest in relation to us is described in the Qur'ân as *al-samâ' al-dunyâ* or the "nether sky". More significantly, it is very specifically stated that this the "nether sky" is decorated with stars (*kawâkib*) and incandescent lights (*maṣâbih*). Thus 41:12, after referring to Allah's having created the seven skies and set in each sky its order ﴿وأوحىٰ في كل سماء أمرها﴾ adds:

﴿وزيّنا السماء الدنيا بمصابيح...﴾

"and We decorated the nether sky with incandescent lights."

The same thing is stated in 67:5; while 37:6 states:

﴿إنا زينا السماء الدنيا بزينة الكواكب...﴾

"Verily We have decorated the nether sky with the decoration of stars..."

This feature is thus especial to the "nether" or the immediate sky. The reference here is obviously to the vast region of space in which the solar system and the neighbouring constellation exist. Modern scientific knowledge seems to be grappling with the nature and scope of this the "nether sky". According to the present state of that knowledge, this the "nether sky" is "roofed" by the "milky way" which contains at least one thousand billion stars!

With regard to the sky the notion of space is conveyed by the fact that the heavenly bodies—the sun, the moon, the stars—are described as having been set "in" (في) it and that they are made to move in certain well regulated ways and for specified terms.[2] Thus 13:2 states:

﴿وسخر الشمس والقمر كل يجرى لأجل مسمى...﴾

"And He has subjected to order the sun and the moon; each runs (its course) for a term appointed...."

Similarly 36:38-40 states:

﴿والشمس تجرى لمستقر لها ذٰلك تقدير العزيز العليم * والقمر قدرنـٰه منازل حتىٰ عاد كالعرجون القديم * لا الشمس ينبغي لها أن تدرك القمر ولا اليل سابق النهار وكل في فلك يسبحون﴾

1. See for instance Q.16:49; 17:44; 17:55; 19:93; 21:19; 23:71; 24:41; 27:65; 28:18; 30:26.

2. See also Q. 14:33; 16:12; 29:61; 31:20; 31:29; 35:13; 39:5; 45:13; 7:4; 16:12.

"The sun runs its course to a destnation for it; that is the ordaining of the Almighty, the All-knowing. And the moon We have determined for it stations, till it reverts to the like of a withered palm-bough. It behoves not the sun to overtake the moon, neither does the night outstrip the day. And each swims in an orbit (space)."

Whatever interpretation one may like to put on the terms *mustaqarr* and *falak* in the above passage, the sense of motion and movement on the one hand, and that of space on the other, are all too clear from the expresions *yazrî*, *tajrî* and *yasbaḥûn*.

That the term *samâ'* (sky) embraces the open space above (or around) us is clearly indicated by such passages as 16:79 and 30:48. The first passage states:

﴿ألم يروا إلى الطير مسخرٰت فِي جو السماء...﴾

"Do they not look at the birds subjected to order in the midst of the sky?....

" The second passage, 30:48, states:

﴿الله الذِى يرسل الريٰح فتثير سحابا فيبسطه فِى السماء كيف يشاء...﴾

"It is Allah Who sends the winds that raise the clouds. Thus He spreads them in the sky as He wills..."[1]

Coming to the group of passages that speak about the end, the most important thing to note is that the skies, along with the stars, planets and all the other creation, will be brought to an end. "That day We shall roll up the sky like the rolling up of the scroll of writings. As We began the first creation, We shall repeat it..."[2] That day the sky will "disintegrate with clouds";[3] it will come up with "visible smoke";[4] it "will be in a state of commotion";[5] it "will be rent asunder and turn red like paint";[6] it "will be like molten brass";[7] the stars will be displaced and scattered[8] and the sun and the moon will be joined together.[9] Finally, a new world and new skies will be ushered

1. The Qur'ân sometimes also figuratively employs the term *samâ'* for rain. Such passages are not, however, relevant to the present discussion.
2. Q. 21:104 = ﴿يوم نطوِى السماء كطِىّ السجل للكتب كما بدأنا أول خلق نعيده...﴾
3. Q. 25:25 = ﴿ويوم تشقّق السماء بالغمٰم...﴾
4. Q. 44:10 = ﴿... يوم تأتِي السماء بدخان مبين﴾
5. Q. 52:9 = ﴿يوم تمور السماء مورا﴾
6. Q. 55:37 = ﴿فإذا انشقت السماء فكانت وردة كالدهان﴾
7. Q. 70; 8 = ﴿يوم تكون السماء كالمهل﴾
8. Q. 82:1 = ﴿إذا السماء انفطرت * وإذا الكواكب انتثرت﴾
9. Q. 75:9 = ﴿وجمع الشمس والقمر﴾

See also Q. 39:67; 69:16; 73:18; 77:9; 78:19; 81:11 and 84:1

in, as the Qur'ân states:

﴿يوم تبدل الأرض غير الأرض والسمٰوٰت...﴾

"That day the earth will be exchanged for another earth, and the skies too." (14:48)

Thus will be the end of the present state of the world and the universe and the begining of a new life and a new world — the hereafter.

The process thus described belongs to the future, and Allah Alone knows when and how these will be effected. So far as modern science is concerned, it only speculates that the world may come to an end as a result of some serious disturbance and dislocation in the solar and planetary systems. It is thus not in disharmony with the Qur'ânic statements noted above.

The expressions "folding up", "rent asunder", etc. used in connection with the end of the skies may give an impression that these are objects susceptible of being "broken up". Like the terms "edifice" (بناء) and "roof" (سقف), these expressions also may be interpreted without assuming the skies to be "solid" objects, particularly as the process described includes also the stars, the planets and other heavenly bodies. Similarly, the existence of living beings in the skies does not mean that these latter should be solid objects like the earth; for, just as the earth is set in the sky (space), so there are other earths in the skies. The Qur'ân very clearly states in 65:12:

﴿الله الذى خلق سبع سمٰوٰت ومن الأرض مثلهن...﴾

"Allah is He who created the seven skies, and of the earth the like of them."

Also, it should be noted that the other living beings may have other types of physique and constitution; so their places of habitation may be different in nature than that of ours. Again, since even human beings become "weightless" at a certain distance in the space and may move about therein without the "support" of "solid" objects, it would be wrong to assume on the basis of the existence of living beings in the skies that these latter are therefore "solid" things.

It should be clear from the above discussion that there are certain expressions in the Qur'ân which, if approached with the primitive notion about the sky, would fit in with that notion, but they are very much appropriate to the modern concept of the sky and the universe. Above all, it should not be lost sight of that the present state of our knowledge is confined only to a part of what constitutes the "nether sky", *al-samâ' al-dunyâ.* The region lying beyond this nearest sky, with all its stars and planets, is simply beyond our knowledge. Even the scientists admit that what they have hitherto learnt about the extent and nature of the sky is only a microscopic particle in rela-

tion to what remains unknown of it. What lies beyond this known or supposedly known region is completely dark to us. In view of all these it would be simply presumptuous to assume that the Qur'ânic statements about the sky are not in accord with modern scientific knowledge. At any rate, Watt's assumption that the Qur'ânic view of the sky is primitive, reflecting the state of knowledge in the sventh century is wrong in three main respects. He picks up only a few statements in the Qur'ân, approaches them with the "primitive" notion and puts a very narrow construction on them. Secondly, he ignores a number of other statements in the Qur'ân that are surprisingly in accord with modern scientific information about the sky and the significance of which may be fully appreciated with the further progress of our knowledge. Thirdly, he seems to assume that modern scientists have the last word about the sky and that nothing remains to be known about it, which is not at all the case; for the scientists themselves admit that they have not fathomed even a particle of the vast and bewildering creation, the sky.

SECTION III
ON THE EVE OF THE CALL TO PROPHETHOOD

CHAPTER XIII

ON THE EVE OF THE CALL: THE *ḤANÎFS* AND THE AFFAIR OF 'UTHMÂN IBN AL-ḤUWAYRITH

It has been shown before[1] that Muḥammad (ﷺ) did not entertain any ambition nor did he make any preparation for becoming a Prophet and receiving divine communication (*waḥy*). Nor is the Qur'ân a collection of information derived from Judaeo-Christian and other sources.[2] In saying this it is not intended to suggest that the Prophet was isolated from his society and environment and did not concern himself with the affairs of his own people. The intention has been only to emphasize that notwithstanding his concern for his society and people, and despite his contemplation and deliberation, his call to prophethood and the revelations he received were only from God and were no product of his mind and contemplation. This fact becomes all the clearer when we take into account the developments that immediately preceded his call to prophethood.

Broadly, three developments attract our attention. These were: (i) a search made by a number of individuals who go by the name of *ḥanîfs* to find the true religion bequeathed by Prophet Ibrâhîm; (ii) an attempt made by one such individual to bring about a change of government and society at Makka with the help of the Christian Byzantine power; and (iii) the resort to solitary stay and contemplation (*al-taḥannuth*) by Muḥammad (ﷺ) at a cave on top of the mount Ḥirâ', some three miles away from the busy life of the Makkan city centre.

The first two of these three developments are treated in the present chapter. The third, being immediately connected with the receipt of revelation by the Prophet, is dealt with in that connection in the following chapter.

I. THE *ḤANÎFS*

The historians mention a number of persons who, shortly before Muḥammad's (ﷺ) call to prophethood, gave up idolatry and polytheism and sought the true Abrahamic religion called *al-ḥanifiyyah.* The most frequently mentioned names are:

(1) Waraqah ibn Nawfal (ibn Asad ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzâ).

1. *Supra*, Ch. VIII.
2. *Supra*, Chaps. IX and X.

(2) 'Uthmân ibn al-Ḥuwayrith (ibn Asad ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzâ)

(3) 'Ubayd Allah ibn Jaḥsh

(4) Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl

(5) 'Umayyah ibn 'Abî al-Ṣalt

(6) 'Amr ibn 'Abasah

(7) Ṣirmah ibn 'Abî 'Anas (or ibn 'Abî Qays)

(8) Al-Nâbighah al-Ja'dî

(9) Ri'âb ibn al-Barâ'

(10) 'Abû 'Âmir al-'Awsî

(11) Khâlid ibn Sinân ibn Ghayth

(12) 'Abû Qays ibn al-Aṣlat

The first four persons in the list may be said to form a class by themselves for two reasons. In the first place, they were all inhabitants of Makka and were not only contemporaries of Muḥammad (ﷺ) but also from among his close relatives and acquaintances. Secondly, they appear to have renounced idolatry and embarked upon a search for the true religion of Ibrâhîm almost simultaneously. It is related by Ibn Isḥâq that these four persons were once present at an annual religious gathering of the Quraysh who had assembled there for rendering homage to an idol and offering sacrifices to it. On that occasion these four men silently withdrew from the assemblage and whispered among themselves that all those people of theirs had far strayed from the religion of their forefathers, the religion of Ibrâhîm, and that it was meaningless to worship a stone (idol) which could neither hear nor see, nor do good or harm to anyone. They then dispersed and subsequently each separately travelled in different lands in search of *al-ḥanifiyyah*, the religion of Ibrâhîm.[1]

It is obvious that though these persons thus dissociated themselves from their peoples' religious ceremony all at a time, their dislike of polytheism and idol-worship must have been developing within themselves for sometime past. It is also noteworthy that what they did was a spontaneous and unobtrusive act and not at all a concerted public movement on their part. This is all the clearer from the further fact noted by Ibn Isḥâq that they agreed

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 222-223.

among themselves not to divulge their feelings to others.[1] But whatever the nature of their action, it is significant that they were convinced that their people had been far removed from the original religion of Ibrâhîm, *al-ḥanîfiyyah*, which they and their people were supposed to follow.

The first named person, Waraqah ibn Nawfal,[2] belonged to Banû Asad of Quraysh and was a paternal uncle of *'Umm al-Mu'minîn* Khadîjah (r.a.), both her father Khuwaylid and Nawfal being two of the sons of Asad ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzâ. Waraqah was evidently the oldest of the group of four. The details of his search for the true religion are not known; but it is on record that he ultimately settled with Christianity, acquired a good knowledge of the Bible and also knew Hebrew in which he is stated to have copied parts of the Christian scripture. He was very advanced in age when the Prophet received the first revelation. It is well known how after that momentous event Khadîjah (r.a.) took the Prophet to this cousin of hers and how he, Waraqah, assured them that Muḥammad (ﷺ) had received God's commission similar to that of Moses and that it would involve him in troubles with his own people, adding that if he (Waraqah) lived till that time he would extend all possible help to him. It is clear from this report that though Waraqah had embraced Christianity, he still entertained two specific notions, namely, that God's revelation comes to a Prophet through the angel Jibrîl (Nâmûs) and that another of His Prophets was shortly to appear. Indeed Waraqah was convinced that Muḥammad (ﷺ) was that expected Prophet. In view of Waraqah's antecedent, advanced age and acquaintance with the Judaeo-Christian scriptures it is reasonable to assume that his above mentioned notions were the result of his study of those scriptures as they existed at that time.

The second person in the list, 'Uthmân ibn al-Ḥuwayrith also belonged to Banû Asad and was a cousin of both Waraqa and Khadîjah (r.a.); for 'Uthmân's father, Al-Ḥuwayrith, was another son of Asad ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzâ.'Uthmân's quest for the true religion ended with his effort to change the religion and government at Makka with foreign assistance, which will be related in the next section.

'Ubayd Allah ibn Jaḥsh, the third in the list, belonged to Banû Asad ibn Khuzaymah. He was a cousin of the Prophet in that 'Ubayd Allah's mother,'Umaymah, was 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's daughter and therefore a paternal

1. *Ibid.*, 222.
2. See for Waraqah, *ibid.*, 223; Ibn Qutaybah, *Al-Ma'ârif*, 59, Al-Mas'ûdî, *Murûj.*, I, 73.

aunt of the Prophet. Like the others 'Ubayd Allah travelled in the neighbouring lands in search of *al-ḥanîfiyyah* and, after the Prophet had received his call, became one of the early converts to Islam. His wife, 'Umm Ḥabîbah, daughter of 'Abû Sufyân ibn Ḥarb (of Banû 'Abd Shams) also embraced Islam. Both 'Ubayd Allah and his wife were among the first group of Muslims who migrated to Abyssinia. There 'Ubayd Allah ultimately went over to Christianity and died in that state. His wife,'Umm Ḥabîbah, however, remained steadfast in Islam and was subsequently married to the Prophet.[1]

The most interesting is the story of Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl.[2] He belonged to Banû 'Adyy (ibn Ka'b ibn Lu'ayy). He was a cousin of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb's, both Al-Khaṭṭâb and 'Amr being sons of Nufayl. Zayd's son, Sa'îd, married 'Umar's sister, Fâṭimah, and both husband and wife became early converts to Islam. Zayd had a strong abhorrence of idolatry and did not partake of the meat of any animal sacrificed for an idol. Likewise he refrained from taking the meat of an animal which died of itself and from alcoholic drinks. He did not ultimately keep his views a secret and openly opposed the bad *jâhiliyyah* custom of killing female babes and often saved their lives by himself undertaking to maintain them. Sometimes he used to sit by the Ka'ba and there declare that none except he of his people was truly on the religion of Ibrâhîm and then prostrate himself only for the sake of Allah. His renunciation of idol-worship and his denunciation of the *jâhiliyyah* customs were pronounced enough to evoke the hostility of even his own cousin, Al-Khaṭṭâb. The latter is said to have instigated Zayd's wife and others against him. Because of the enmity and opposition of these people it became difficult for Zayd to stay in Makka. In any case he undertook journeys to the neighbouring lands, particularly Syria, in search of *al-ḥanîfiyyah*,"the religion of Ibrâhîm." There he met Christian monks and Jewish rabbis but neither Christianity nor Judaism appealed to him. It is stated that he even considered both these religions equally corrupted by polytheistic practices. It is further related that in reply to his queries about the religion of Ibrâhîm one of the monks told him that a Prophet was to appear with *ḥanifiyyah*,"the religion of Ibrâhîm" in Zayd's own land and that the time for his appearance had just approached. On hearing this Zayd hastened to get back to Makka but was killed by some persons while still within the bounds of Syria. A report

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 223-224.

2. See for him *ibid.*, 224-232; *Al-'Iṣâbah,* I, 569-570 (no. 2923); *Al-Istî'âb,* II, 614 (no. 982); *Kitâb al-Aghânî*, II, 133.

says that he had once met the Porphet before his call in the vicinity of Makka.[1] This incdent must have taken place before Zayd made his fateful journey to Syria. It is further reported that once his son Sa‘îd asked the Prophet whether they could pray for Zayd's soul. The Prophet expressed his view that they could.

Besides these four, most of the others in the list were also contemporaries of the Prophet. ’Umayyah ibn ’Abî al-Ṣalt, the fifth in the list, belonged to Banû Thaqîf.[2] Like his father ’Abû al-Ṣalt ibn ’Abî al-Rabî‘ah,’Umayyah was a poet. He is equally known, however, as a *ḥanîf* and as a seeker after the true religion. There is no doubt that he had no faith in idolatry. He considered wine unlawful and abstained from taking it. He had studied the scriptures of the Christians and the Jews but did not embrace either of these religions. His verses are chiefly on religious topics, savouring remarkably of monotheism. It is related by ’Abû Bakr al-Ṣiddîq (r.a.) that one day he and Zayd ibn ‘Amr were seated by the Ka‘ba when ’Umayyah ibn’Abî al-Ṣalt passed by them. At that time Zayd asked him whether he had found the true religion he had been seeking.’Umayyah replied that he had not yet, and then recited a composition of his saying that every religion except *al-ḥanîfiyyah* was vain before Allah.[3] Like the others he also believed that a Prophet was shortly to appear with the true religion. Indeed he himself hoped to be that Prophet. Hence when Muḥammad (ﷺ) received his call ’Umayyah, out of envy, did not recognize his prophethood and bitterly opposed him.[4]

The sixth, seventh and eighth in the list, namely, ‘Amr ibn ‘Abasah, Ṣirmah ibn ’Anas and Al-Nâbighah al-Ja‘dî, may be grouped together because all of them ultimately embraced Islam at the hands of the Prophet. ‘Amr ibn ‘Abasah belonged to Banû Sulaym. According to his own statements he had renounced the idols during the period of *jâhiliyyah,* considered them utterly worthless and used to point out the people's folly in worshipping those idols. He further tells us that one day when he was thus speaking about

1. *Supra*, pp. 199-201.

2. See for him generally Ibn Qutaybah, *Al-Shi‘r wa al-Shu‘arâ’*, Vol. I., 459 and *Kitâb al-’Aghânî*, Vol. III, 17 ff.

3. *’Usd al-Ghâbah*, Vol. III, 207 (no. 3064). See also Ibn Hishâm, I, 60, where the verse is quoted with slight difference in wording in connection with Abrahah's attack on the Ka‘ba. Some of his verses are quoted also in Al-Mas‘ûdî's *Murûj*, I., 70-71. One of the verses there runs as follows: (الحمد لله لا شريك له من لم يقله فنفسه ظلما)

4. *Kitâb al-’Aghânî*, Vol. III, 187.

the idols, one of his listeners pointed out to him that there had appeared at Makka a person (i.e. the Prophet) who spoke similarly about the idols. Thereupon 'Amr came to Makka, met the Prophet and after listening to his exposition of Islam embraced it at his hands.[1]

Similarly Ṣirmah ibn 'Anas of Banû 'Adyy ibn al-Najjâr abandoned the worship of idols in the period of *jâhiliyyah*, adopted a monastic life and built a place of worship for himself where anyone not in a state of purity was not allowed to enter. He used to take bath after sexual intercourse, abstained from approaching a woman in a state of menstruation and avoided alcoholic and intoxicating drinks. He used to declare that he worshipped only the God of Ibrâhîm and followed his religion. When the Prophet migrated to Madina Ṣirmah was a very old man. He attended the Prophet, however, and embraced Islam at his hands.[2]

Al-Nâbighah al-Ja'dî of Banû 'Âmir ibn Ṣa'ṣa'ah also used to talk about monotheism and the religion of Ibrâhîm during the period of *jâhiliyyah*. In addition, he believed in life after death, punishment, paradise and hell. Subsequently he embraced Islam.[3] Similarly Ri'âb ibn al-Barâ', 'Abû 'Âmir al-'Awsî and Khâlid ibn Sinân ibn Ghayth had also renounced idolatry, believed in One God and expected that a Prophet would soon appear with the true religion of Ibrâhîm.[4]

The last, in the list, 'Abû Qays ibn al-Aṣlat is to be distinguished from the three above mentioned persons in that though none at Madina was better known as a *ḥanîf* and though he met the Prophet when he migrated there, he could not ultimately embrace Islam. He was a poet and a leading figure among the 'Aws tribe. It is said that he even led his clan in war. He used to speak about *al-ḥanîfiyyah* in his poems and even of the forecasts of the Jewish and Christian scriptures about the coming of a Prophet. The Jews of Madina urged him to embrace Judaism but he declined. Like many others of his group he travelled to Syria in search of the true religion. There the monks and rabbis likewise invited him to accept their religions but he refused to do

1. *Musnad*, IV, 111, 114; *Muslim, Kitâb al ṣalât al-musâfirîn, Bâb* 53, *ḥadîth* no. 394 (p. 832); Nawawî, IV, 114-115; *'Usd al-Ghâbah*, III, 210; *Al-Istî'âb*, III, 1192-1194, no. 1936.

2. *Al-'Iṣâbah,* II, 182-183, (no. 4061).

3. *Al-Istî'âb,* IV, 1514 (no. 2648).

4. Ibn Qutaybah, *Al-Ma'ârif* (ed. Tharwat 'Ukâshah), Cairo, n.d., 58-68; Al-Mas'ûdî, *Murûj*, I., (ed. M.M. 'Abd al-Ḥamîd), Beirut, n.d., 67-69.

so. Thereupon one of the monks told him that *al-ḥanîfiyyah* which he had been seeking was the religion of Ibrâhîm and that it was to be found in his own land. Therefore he returned to Madina and went to Makka to perform *'umrah*. There he met Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl and had a conversation with him. He told him that he (Zayd) also had found the religions of the monks and the rabbis untrue and that the only true monotheism was *al-ḥanîfiyyah,* the religion of Ibrâhîm. When the Prophet migrated to Madina 'Abû Qays met him, listened to his exposition of Islam and was convinced of its truth and of him as Prophet. On his way back home, however, 'Abû Qays came across 'Abd Allah ibn 'Ubayy who instigated him against the Khazraj. Thereupon he decided to defer his acceptance of Islam for a year. Before the expiry of that time, however, he died about ten months after the Prophet's migration to Madina.[1]

Besides these persons Quss ibn Sâ'ida, 'Addâs (*mawlâ* of 'Utbah ibn Rabî'ah) and even Baḥîra, the Bosra monk, are reckoned by some as among the *ḥanîfs*.[2] One might even add to their rank 'Abû Dharr al-Ghifârî and Salmân al-Fârisî. The former had abandoned idol worship and started performing *ṣalât* for Allah for three years prior to his conversion to Islam;[3] while the latter (Salmân) had undertaken a long search for *al-ḥanîfiyyah* the true religion of Ibrâhîm, before he ultimately found the truth in Islam.[4]

It is clear from the above that all those persons were actuated by a revulsion against polytheism and gross idolatry of the time and, conversely, by an urge towards monotheism. This monotheism they equated with *al-ḥanîfiyyah,* the religion of Ibrâhîm. The sources unequivocally speak of this fact and also reproduce the statements of a number of those persons making specific mention of *al-ḥanîfiyyah* and identifying it with the religion of Ibrâhîm. Even the poems of 'Umayyah ibn 'Abî al-Ṣalt use this specific term. Also, many of them were specifically known as *ḥanîfs* among their peoples.

This urge to get back to the religion of Ibrâhîm is significant. For it is an established fact that in spite of their degeneration into idolatry the Arabs traced their origin, the sacredness of the Ka'ba and a number of their reli-

1. Ibn Sa'd, IV, 383-385.
2. Ibn Qutaybah, *op.cit.*, 61; Al-Mas'ûdî, *Murûj*, I., 69, 74, 75.
3. *Musnad*, V, 174; *'Al-Istî'âb*, I., 252-256.
4. Ibn Hishâm, I., 214-222; Al-Dhahabî, *Siyar*, I, 505-557.

gious rites and customs to Ibrâhîm. Also the concept of Allah as Supreme God had not been totally forgotten. It was thus natural that those pious souls who yearned after monotheism sought a revival of the original faith of their progenitor. The search for *al-ḥanîfiyyah* was thus yet another evidence as well as a consequence of the continuity of the Abrahamic tradition in Arabia. It also illustrates the fact that Judaism and Christianity as they then prevailed in Arabia and Syria did not have an unquestioned monotheistic appeal to those enquirers; for most of them did not embrace either, although they had met the savants of both the faiths. In fact many of the *ḥanîfs* considered the Judaism and Christianity of the time as equally corrupt religions. And although a couple of enquirers like Waraqah ibn Nawfal and 'Uthmân ibn al-Ḥuwayrith embraced Christianity, the former evidently did not consider it the final truth; for, by all accounts, he still entertained the notion of the coming of another Prophet and another revelation from Allah. And the latter, 'Uthmân ibn al-Ḥuwayrith, was obviously actuated by his self-interest and ambition.

There is no doubt, however, that on the eve of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) call to prophethood a spirit of enquiry and an urge for finding the truth had gained momentum with a number of thoughtful men of the land, including the Prophet's own town and from among his own relatives and acquaintances. Being himself a thoughtful man he obviously could not have remained totally impervious to this spirit of the time. Before discussing how he responded to it, however, it would be worthwhile to notice the affair of 'Uthmân ibn al-Ḥuwayrith.

II. THE AFFAIR OF 'UTHMÂN IBN AL-ḤUWAYRITH

'Uthmân ibn al-Ḥuwayrith, a cousin of both Khadîjah (r.a.) and Waraqah ibn Nawfal, was one of the most intelligent and resourceful men of Quraysh.[1] Like the others he also travelled in search of the true religion and went to Syria where he embraced Christianity. His conversion to that faith was not, however, disinterested. He formed a scheme of becoming the ruler of Makka and turning its people Christians with the support of the Byzantine authority.[2] According to Ibn Isḥâq he visited the Byzantine ruler and proposed to hold Makka for him and to arrange for tributes to be sent to him,

1. Al-Fâsî. *'Al-'Iqd al-Thamîn etc.*, I., 153.

2. Muḥammad ibn Ḥabib al-Baghdâdî, *Kitâb al-Munammiq Fî Akhbâr Quraysh*, (ed Khurshid Aḥmad Fârîq), Beirut, 1985, p. 154.

suggesting that if the Makkans did not yield to the scheme they could be brought to their heels by the Byzantine ruler's stopping their trade with Syria.[1] The Byzantine ruler naturally saw in the plan an opportunity to turn the heart of Arabia together with the commercially prosperous and religiously central city of Makka into a satellite state like the Ghassanid kingdom. The scheme must have appealed to him as an easy way to achieve the object which Abrahah's military campaign some thirty years previously had failed to do. Accordingly the Byzantine authorities appointed 'Uthmân governor of Makka[2] and wrote to its people asking them to submit to him.[3]

'Uthmân returned with this commission to Makka and asked the Quraysh to accept him as their ruler, telling them that if they did not do so their trade with Syria would be embargoed by the Byzantine ruler.[4] His claim was opposed by the Makkans in general, the leading part in the opposition being taken by a man of his own clan, Aswad ibn Asad ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzâ,[5] who organized the Quraysh clans as a whole against the move. Thus having failed to gain any support for himself, 'Uthmân was obliged to escape to Syria. He still did not totally abandon his scheme and induced the Byzantine authorities to stop the Makkans' trade with Syria. Hence, when two of the leading merchants of Makka, Sa'îd ibn al-'Âṣî ibn 'Umayyah and 'Abû Dhi'b (i.e. Hishâm ibn Shu'bah ibn 'Abd Allah) went to Syria, they were arrested and put into prison.'Abu Dhi'b died in the prison. Faced with this situation the Quraysh leader Al-Walîd ibn al-Mughîrah went to Syria and obtained Sa'îd's release after prolonged negotiations. Al-Walîd's diplomacy and the Byzantine need for preserving trade relations with Arabia ultimately turned the table upon 'Uthmân who was shortly afterwards poisoned to death. According to one report he was poisoned by 'Amr ibn Jafnah al-Ghassânî, the very officer who had earlier been entrusted by the Byzantine authorities to enforce the trade embargo and imprison the Makkan merchants.[6]

Thus ended the affair of 'Uthmân ibn al-Ḥuwayrith. It took place definitely after the *Fijâr* wars, most probably close on to the time of the rebuild-

1. Suhaylî, *Al-Rawḍ al-'Unuf*, I., 255.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.* Also Al-Fâsî, *op.cit.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. He thus appears to be an uncle of 'Uthmân's. Al-Fâsî, however, describes the person as 'Uthmân's cousin, calling him 'Abû Jam'ah.
6. Suhaylî, *op.cit.*

ing of the Ka'ba which, as noted earlier, took place when the Prophet was about thirty-five years of age. The absence of a central and decisive authority at Makka which that incident illustrates seems to have encouraged 'Uthmân to embark upon his bold design. His failure shows, however, that whatever might have been the state of government at Makka at the time and whatever the nature and extent of inter-clan rivalry, the Quraysh clans were at one with regard to the basic issue of their independence and freedom from foreign interference.

With reference to this incident, however, a number of assumptions have been made. Thus Watt, who seeks to explain the rise of Islam in the context of Makkan politics and "high finance", links this episode with what he conceives to be the Makkan policy of neutrality between the two "giants", the Byzantine and the Persian empires. He says that among other reasons, the Makkans rejected 'Uthmân ibn al-Ḥuwayrith because they thought it "unwise to depart from the policy of neutrality".[1] The untenability of Watt's theory of neutrality as a whole has been pointed out earlier. It may only be added here that the other "giant", Persia, did not make any move to bring Makka under control so that the question of a policy of neutrality between these two powers in the present instance does not arise at all. The simple reason for the Makkan opposition to 'Uthmân's design, as stated by his kinsman Aswad, was that Makka did not, nor would sbmit to the rule of such a "king".[2] No theory of neutrality between two big powers is needed to explain the Makkan rejection of 'Uthmân's pretensions, especially when he had forsaken the established religion and had come forward as a stooge of a foreign power and with the design of not only becoming a ruler but also substituting that established religion for Christianity. Makka would have reacted similarly even if he had not changed his faith and acted as a foreign agent.

Watt also attempts to link the incident with his theory about the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl*. Thus he says that had Banû 'Umayyah and Banû Makhzûm, who were outside the *Ḥilf*, come forward in taking the lead in opposing 'Uthmân," it would have given fresh life to the confederacy of the Fuḍûl", but such an eventuality was averted "by getting a member of Asad to take the lead."[3] This is a pure conjecture without any support in the sources. Under-

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, 16.
2. Suhayli, *op.cit.*
3. Watt, *M. at M..* 16.

lying the hypothesis is the equally faulty assumption that the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍûl* had been weak and ineffective since its inception. The baselessness of that assumption too has been shown earlier.[1] 'Uthmân's own clan, Asad, of course belonged to the *Ḥilf*; but there is no indication in the sources that he acted, even remotely, in the interest of the group. Nor did the other clans of the *Ḥilf* look upon his move in any way calculated to improve their position. Nor is there any hint in the sources that the clans like 'Umayyah and Makhzûm considered the affair in the light of their rivalry with the *Ḥilf* and made any manoeuvre to get someone of Asad to take the lead in opposing 'Uthmân. If the affair had in any way been one between the *Ḥilf* and their rival group, there is no reason to believe that a leading individual of the former like Al-Aswad ibn Asad would have failed to see his group interest in the matter and would instead have played a pawn in the hands of the opponents of his group. Nor would the other leaders of the group have allowed him to play that role. Watt disregards all these aspects of the matter and builds one conjecture upon another, all based on the implied assumption that the leaders of the *Ḥilf* were all fools enough not to see the game of their rivals. In any case, Watt's basic assumption, that the members of Banû Makhzûm and Banû 'Umayyah purposely remained in the background regarding the affair is also wrong. For it was Al-Walîd ibn al-Mughîrah, leader of Banû Makhzûm, who in fact played the leading role in the final scene of the act and brought about 'Uthmân's destruction.

The third assumption in this connection was originally made by Margoliouth and subsequently taken over by Watt. It suggests that because of 'Uthmân ibn al-Ḥuwayrith's incident Muḥammad (ﷺ) became aware of the political implications of embracing either Christianity or Judaism and therefore came forward with a monotheism free from such political implications. Clearly, this suggestion has for its basis the other assumption that Muḥammad (ﷺ) made conscious and calculated moves to become a Prophet. The incorrectness of that assumption has been shown earlier.[2] Apart from that, the suggestion suffers from another fallacy. It assumes that the Christianity and Judaism of the time offered clear and unmistakable monotheism. That they did not do so is amply illustrated by the attitude of the enquirers after the truth. The fact that most of them did not find these reli-

1. *Supra*, pp. 227-228.
2. *Supra*, chapter X.

gions quite satisfactory to their quest and refrained from embracing either of them is enough to show that there was no special need for Muḥammad (ﷺ) to have recourse to political considerations for finding an "alternative" monotheism. Islam was not simply an alternative monotheism to the Arabs shorn of the political implications of Judaism and Christianity, as Watt states.[1]

1. Watt, *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 38.

CHAPTER XIV

THE ORIENTALISTS AND THE *ḤANIFS*: I. THE JEFFERY-BELL THEORY

I. SUMMARY OF THE THEORY

One constant endeavour of the orientalists has been to relate the rise of Islam to the contemporary situation and to show that Muḥammad (ﷺ) received information and ideas from various sources. The subject of the *ḥanîfs* has therefore naturally attracted a good deal of the orientalists' attention. Writing in the middle of the nineteenth century Aloy Sprenger suggested that there was in pre-Islamic Arabia a wide-spread religious movement initiated by a "sect" of *ḥanîfs* and that Muḥammad (ﷺ) simply placed himself at the head of the movement, organized and directed it and utilized it for his own ends.[1] Such extreme views were, however, quickly called in question, mainly by Ignaz Goldziher, who pointed out Sprenger's errors and stated that the *ḥanîfs* did not form any organized group but were a few isolated individuals.[2]

By the end of the nineteenth century and during the early years of the twentieth a number of scholars addressed themselves to the subject, concentrating on the etymology of *ḥanîf*.[3] The view that prevailed for some time was that the word *ḥanîf* might be connected with the Hebrew *ḥânéf* meaning "profane". There was no noticeable departure from the general thesis, however, that whatever might have been the origin of the word, Muḥammad (ﷺ) was influenced by the *ḥanîfs*. Writing in 1907 the prevailing view was reflected by R.A. Nicholson when he said: "No doubt Muḥammad, with whom most of them [the *ḥanîfs*] were contemporary, came under their influence, and may have received his first stimulus from this quarter."[4]

The etymological aspect of the question received further attention in

1. A Sprenger, *Das Leben und die Lehre des Mohammed*, I., Berlin, 1861, pp. 45-134.

2. I. Goldziher, *Muhammadanische Studien*, I, Halle, 1888, pp. 1-39.

3. See J. Wellhausen, *Reste Arabiscen Heidentums*, second edn., Berlin, 1897, p. 238; D.S. Margoliouth, *J.R.A.S.*, 1903, pp. 467-493; Sir Charles Layall, *ibid.*, pp. 771-784 and L. Caetani, *Annalli dell' Islam*, I, Milan, 1905, pp. 181-192.

4. R.A. *Nicholson, A Literary History of the Arabs* (1st edn. 1907), 1988 reprint, p. 150. See also P.K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (1st. edn. 1937), 10th edn., reprinted 1986, pp. 107-108.

Arthur Jeffery's thesis on *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ân.*[1] He suggested that the word *ḥanîf* was derived from the Syriac *ḥanpâ* meaning "heathen". He further stated that the term *ḥanîf* is applied in the Qur'ân mainly to Ibrâhîm who came to play an important part at a certain stage in Muḥammad's (ﷺ) career, namely, when he was claiming that his teachings went back to a revelation earlier than either Judaism or Christianity, *millat Ibrâhîm*, which he was restoring and republishing.[2]

On perusing this thesis before its publication Richard Bell came forward with a theory in the pages of *The Moslem World*,[3] building mainly upon Jeffery's hint about what he calls Ibrâhîm's part at a certain stage in Muḥammad's (ﷺ) life. "There in a nutshell, it seems to me", remarked Bell, "we have the whole secret."[4] The "secret" which he unfolded was as follows. He first somewhat modified Jeffery's view about the origin of the word saying that "the long vowel of the second syllable of *ḥanîf* is fatal to its derivation from Syriac *ḥanpâ* in its singular form", but that the Arabic plural form, *ḥunafâ'*, is a close reproduction of the Syriac plural *ḥanephê*. Therefore, Bell said, the word was borrowed in its plural form and from it the singular form *ḥanîf* was made according to the rules of Arabic grammar, but in a reverse order. He further said that the Syriac-speaking Christians used the word *ḥanephê* to mean the unconverted Arabs. Hence *ḥunafâ'* "were the Arabs who were neither Jews nor Christians, but who continued to follow the ancient native religion."[5]

Thus explaining the origin and meaning of the term Bell stated that Muḥammad (ﷺ) used it to convey "the very antithesis of polytheist" and, indeed, to make Makka, "the town which had rejected him" and against which he "was planning revenge", the centre of his religion because of his differences with the Jews. Bell argued that though the Prophet had earlier borrowed "a certain amount of positive teaching" from Judaism and Christianity, when he came to Madina differences developed between him and the

1. Published at Baroda for the first time in 1938.

2. A Jeffery, *op.cit.*, 112-115.

3. R. Bell, "Who were the Hanifs", *The Moslem World*, 1930, pp. 120-124. Bell acknowledges his debt to Jeffery thus: "The suggestion came to me from reading a discussion of the word *ḥanîf* in a thesis by Dr. Arthur Jeffery, of Cairo, on The Foreign Vocabulary of the Koran — a valuable work which it is hoped may soon find a publisher".— *Ibid.*, p. 120.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

5. *Ibid.*

Jews for certain reasons.[1] Therefore he started breaking away from both these religions, beginning with the change of *qibla* from Jerusalem to Makka and then giving out that God's revelation had originally been the same, "but in course of time the Jews and Christians had both departed from the purity of the faith and had gone their own ways."[2] Having said this Bell added that Muḥammad (ﷺ) had to do with another religion —"the religion of the Arabs, or in the language of those from whom he had hitherto taken his information on religious matters, the *ḥunafâ'*." That must also be a degeneration of the pristine pure religion. And as Abraham (Ibrâhîm) through Ishmael (Ismâ'îl) was the progenitor of the Arabs, Muḥammad (ﷺ) took him to be the founder of the religion of the *ḥunafâ'*, but was careful to add that "he was not one of the polytheists" and that the "*ḥanîf* religion" which he founded was, like all other revealed religions, a pure monotheism. Thus arguing, Bell says that "as Abraham was earlier in time than both Judaism and Christianity, his religion was purer than either of them had ever been... This was the religion, then, which Muḥammad now conceived himself as commissioned to restore. His face is henceforth set, not towards Judaism or Christianity, but towards the assumed pure original of the Arab religion." The *ḥanîfs* were thus, concludes Bell, "the followers of the ideal original of Arab religion. They were no sect or party of historical people, but the product of Muḥammad's unresting mind."[3]

Thus, starting from the climax that the *ḥanîfs* were an organized "sect" who initiated a "movement" towards monotheism, an anticlimax was reached after about a century of conjectures and assumptions and it was stated that the *ḥanîfs* were "no sect or party of historical people" but merely the imaginary "followers of the ideal original of Arab religion", "the product of Muḥammad's unresting mind". Apart from this assumption, Bell's main suggestions are: (a) that the word *ḥanîf* was taken over from the Syriac plural form of *ḥanephê*, (b) that the Syriac-speaking Christians meant by that term the Arabs who followed "the ancient native religion"; (c) that Muḥammad (ﷺ), when he broke away from the Jews at Madina, adopted this term, put the sense of "antithesis of polytheist" on it and identified his teachings with this assumed original of Arab reilgion, which he also identified with the religion of Abraham, "the progenitor" of the Arabs through Ismâ'îl, stressing

1. *Ibid.*, 122-123.
2. *Ibid.*, 123-124.
3. *Ibid.*, 124.

further that God's revelation had originally been the same to all the previous prophets. It is mainly on this Jeffery-Bell formulation that Watt has based his remarks about the *ḥanîfs*. Before passing on to that it would be worthwhile to examine the Jeffery-Bell position a little more closely.

II. UNTENABILITY OF THE JEFFERY-BELL THEORY

To begin with, it may be noted that the statements about the origin of the word *ḥanîf* are based solely on sonic similarities and are thus obviously conjectural and only tentative. In fact, not very long after Bell had given his support to Jeffery's suggestion, two scholars put forth a joint-article discussing the pre-Islamic use of the word and suggesting Aramic-Nabataean origin for it.[1] Since then scholarly opinions have alternated between the Syriac and Nabataean hypotheses.[2]

The origin of the word, however, seems to have very little direct bearing on the point at issue; for it is well-known that the meaning of a word often changes with the change of time and place. A very instructive instance in our own time time is the word "democratic" which is often used in the "Communist Bloc" to denote a socialist totalitarian system, but in the "Western Bloc" it is the very antithesis of totalitarianism. Hence, even if it is shown that the Syriac-speaking Christians used the word *ḥanpâ* to mean "heathen" or the Arabs who followed their ancient native religion, it does not necessarily follow that the Arabic word *ḥanîf*, which is only *supposed* to be a descendant of *ḥanpâ*, was also used by the Arabs in the same sense.

Secondly, the theory of derivation from a foreign language raises the question: when did this borrowing take place? The suggestion seems to be generally that it took place long before Muḥammad's (ﷺ) appearance on the scene. In that case the word had been in use in Arabia and it had reference to a particular class of people. This being the case, is it reasonable to assume that Muḥammad (ﷺ) would use the expression in a totally different, rather opposite sense of a monotheist just for the sake of breaking with the Jews and Christians.? Further, would not such a novel use of the term evoke the opposition and criticism of his own people, not to speak of the very Jews and Christians against whom he was supposedly taking the step? But Bell seems

1. N.A. Faris and H.W. Glidden, "The development of the meaning of the Koranic Hanif", *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society*", XIX, 1939, pp. 1-13.

2. See for instance Hitti, *op.cit*, 108; Watt, *M. at M*, 162-163 and *E.I.*, III, 166. See also below, text.

to suggest that the word was used for the first time in the Qur'ân and that also in a sense oppposite to that put on it by the Syriac-speaking Christians; for he states that Muḥammad (ﷺ) adopted the term from "the language of those from whom he had hitherto taken his information." Now, is it at all reasonable that he should still be adopting the expression of the Jews and Christians when he was breaking with them, if it had not been in use and understood by the Arabs?

The fact is that the word *ḥanîf* was obviously in use in Arabia at the time in the sense of a monotheist. This seems to be a corollary even of Bell's own argument; for, if the Syriac-speaking Christians used the term to denote the Arabs who followed their ancient native religion and if, as Bell admits, Abraham was the "progenitor" of the Arabs, their ancient and native religion could not have been anything else than monotheism. For Ibrahîm, the "progenitor", preached a religion pursuant to divine revelation and that religion, according to both Jews and Christians, was monotheism. That naturally was the ancient and native religion of the Arabs. This meaning of the term *ḥanîf* appears to have been in a way admitted lately by Bell's close disciple, Watt, who recognizes that in some Aramaean circles the "primary" meaning of the term as "heathen" or "pagans" was "overshadowed by secondary connotations", such as "philosophically-minded persons who were essentially monotheistic". He further says that the Qur'ânic usage "neglected the primary meaning and developed some of the secondary connotations, a semantic process not unknown elsewhere..."[1] It may be pointed out that the Qur'ân did not *neglect* what is called the "primary meaning", nor did it *develop* "some of the secondary connotations" of the word. It simply used the expression in the sense in which the Arabs had been using and understanding it since time immemorial.

Apart from the question of the origin and connotations of the word, however, the main theme of the Jefefery-Bell thesis, namely, that the Prophet related his teachings to the Abrahamic tradition and to *ḥanîfiyyah* after his migration to Madina, particularly after differences had developed between him and the Jews of that place, is totally wrong. The underlying premise of the theory, it may be pointed out, is that the Qur'ân is the Prophet's own production, a view which is not at all correct. It is also not correct, as shown before, that the Prophet developed his doctrines at Makka by drawing

1. *E.I.*, III, 166.

information from the Jews and Christians. Neither did he borrow information from them at Makka, nor did he fall back to the Abrahamic tradition and *ḥanifiyyah* at Madina in order to break away from them.

Three broad facts in the Qur'ân contradict this latter assumption. In the first place, the reference to and declaration of identity with the message of Ibrâhîm, and indeed with the messages of all the previous Prophets, were made for the first time not at Madina but much earlier at Makka. A number of the Makkan passages of the Qur'ân bear an eloquent testimony to this fact. It was also at Makka that the Prophet emphasized the common origin and the essential identity of the messages delivered by all the Prophets, including those who came before Ibrâhîm, such as Nûḥ and 'Adam. This is very significant; for there is clearly an element of inconsistency in recognizing, as Bell seems to do, that Muḥammad (ﷺ) claimed that God's revelation had originally been the same to all the Prophets and then to allege that he traced the origin of his message to Ibrâhîm with a view to claiming precedence and greater purity for his monotheism. Secondly, it was also at Makka, long before the migration to Madina, that departures from the fundamental doctrines of both Judaism and Christianity had been made. Thirdly, it was in the Makkan passages of the Qur'ân that reference to the *ḥanîfs* occurs first. A look at the references to Ibrâhîm as a *ḥanîf* in the Madinan *sûrahs* makes it clear that there is no indication whatsoever of an intention to disregard the messages of Moses and Jesus, nor is there the slightest departure from the emphasis on the unity and identity of the messages of all the Prophets.

Before illustrating the above mentioned facts by some of the relevant statements of the Qur'ân, it is necessary to refer briefly to the question of the change of *qibla* (direction for prayer) from Jerusalem to Makka which Bell mentions as an instance of the Prophet's changed attitude towards the Jews. The refixing of the *qibla* of course took place after his arrival at Madina, but this happened some sixteen or seventeen months after his arrival there,[1] in mid-Rajab of the second year of *hijrah*. This means that it had taken place more than two clear months before the battle of Badr which occurred in Ramaḍân of that year. It is well-known that differences with the Jews began

1. *Bukhârî*, no. 399 (*Fatḥ al-Bârî*, I, 598, *Kitâb al-Ṣalât, Bâb* 31); Azraqî, *Akhbâr Makka*, II, 19. There is also a report to the effect that the event took place only two months after the *hijrah* (see *Ibn Mâjah*, no. 1010, Vol. I, 322, *Kitâb* 5, *Bâb* 56), but this does not seem to be correct.

to develop sometime after that battle. Hence, whatever might have been the reason for the change of *qibla* it cannot be historically sustained that the measure was an upshot of the differences with the Jews. If it had been in any way a result of the Prophet's own decision he would have timed it more opportunely, and not when, by all accounts, his position at Madina was not yet stabilized and when, far from doing anything which was likely to alienate the Jews, he was attempting to secure their support and adhesion to the newly established body-politic. It is also somewhat antithetical to suggest, as Bell does, that the Prophet intended to make Makka the centre of his religion when, at the same time, he is said to have been "planning revenge" against that town.

(A) IDENTITY WITH IBRÂHÎM IN THE MAKKAN PASSAGES

The reference to the message of Ibrâhîm, indeed to that of all the previous Prophets, was made repeatedly at Makka. It was also there that the fundamental unity and continuity of the messages delivered by all the Prophets was unmistakably emphasized. Throughout the Makkan period one constant item of persuasion directed to the Quraysh unbelievers was that there had gone by generations before them on whom God's wrath had fallen on account of their rejection of the message delivered to them by the Prophets sent to them. It was also clearly pointed out that all those Prophets came with the same message of monotheism. One of the earliest passages of the Qur'ân emphasizes this fact and makes specific mention of both Ibrâhîm and Mûsâ (Moses) as bearers of the same message. It runs as:

﴿إن هذا لفي الصحف الأولىٰ * صحف إبرٰهيم وموسىٰ﴾ (٨٧ : ١٨-١٩)

"Verily this (the Qur'ânic message) is in the early scriptures, the scriptures of Ibrâhîm and Mûsâ." (87:18-19).

Another Makkan passage asserts:

﴿وما أرسلنا من قبلك من رسول إلا نوحي إليه أنه لا إلـٰـه إلا أنا فاعبدون﴾ (٢١ : ٢٥)

"Not a Messenger did We send before you except that We revealed to him that there is no God but I. So worship Me." (21:25).

Indeed, the instances of the previous Prophets, the monotheism of everyone of them and the unity and continuity of the same message through generations are detailed in a number of the Makkan passages.[1] Also especial emphasis is sometimes laid on Ibrâhîm, Mûsâ and 'Isâ (Jesus) if only

1. See for instance Q. 6:74-90; 7:59-93; 7:103-129; 10:13; 10:47; 10:71-92; 16:36; 16:43-44; 16:120-123; 19:1-58; 20:9-99; 21:25; 21:51-93; 23:23-50; 26:10-191.

because the immediate audience to whom the Qur'ân was addressed especially cherished the memories of those Prophets and claimed to follow their examples and traditions. But there never was a suggestion that the message and teachings of any one of them were "purer" than those of any other Prophet.

One of the passages which illustrates this point very forcefully is 6:83-90 which, after describing Ibrâhîm's struggle to bring home the theme of monotheism to his people, mentions all the well-known Prophets and concludes by categorically asking the listeners to adopt and follow the guidance which those Prophets represented. The passage runs as follows:

﴿وتلك حجتنا ءاتينٰها إبرٰهيم على قومه نرفع درجٰت من نشاء إن ربك حكيم عليم * ووهبنا له إسحٰق ويعقوب كلا هدينا ونوحا هدينا من قبل ومن ذريته داود وسليمٰن وأيوب ويوسف وموسىٰ وهٰرون وكذٰلك نجزى المحسنين * وزكريا ويحيىٰ وعيسىٰ وإلياس كل من الصٰلحين * وإسمٰعيل واليسع ويونس ولوطا وكلا فضلنا على العٰلمين * ومن ءابائهم وذريٰتهم وإخوٰنهم واجتبينٰهم وهدينٰهم إلى صرٰط مستقيم * ذٰلك هدى الله يهدى به من يشاء من عباده ولو أشركوا لحبط عنهم ما كانوا يعملون * أولٰـئك الذين ءاتينٰهم الكتٰب والحكم والنبوة فإن يكفر بها هٰـؤلاء فقد وكلنا بها قوما ليسوا بها بكٰفرين * أولٰـئك الذين هدى الله فبهدٰهم اقتده...﴾ (٦: ٨٣-٩٠)

"That was Our evidence (proof / writ) We gave Ibrâhîm as against his people. We elevate in ranks whom We will. Surely your Lord is All-Wise, All-Knowing. And We gave him Isḥâq (Isaac) and Ya'qûb (Jacob); each We guided. And Nûḥ (Noah) We had guided before; and of his progeny, Dâ'ûd (David), Sulaymân (Solomon), 'Ayyûb (Job), Yûsuf (Joseph), Mûsâ (Moses) and Hârûn (Aaron): and thus do We reward those who do good deeds. And Zakariyyâ and Yaḥyâ (John), and 'Îsâ (Jesus) and Ilyâs (Elias) — all were righteous; and Ismâ'îl and Elisha and Yûnus (Jona) and Lûṭ (Loṭ), and all of them We selected among the creations; and of their fathers, their progeny and their brothers: and We selected them and guided them to a straight path. This is God's guidance. He guides therewith whom he pleases of His servants. Had they (those Prophets) associated other gods with Him, all that they used to do would have gone in vain. Those are they to whom We gave the Book, the authority and prophethood. Then if these (their descendants) reject them, We shall entrust them (the Book, propphethood, etc.,) to a people who do not reject them. Those were they whom God gave guidance. So follow the guidance they had..." (6:83-90).

To the same effect is the rather long passage, 21:71-92. It also comes after a description of Ibrâhîm's efforts to convert his people to monotheism (*'âyahs* 53-70) and refers briefly to the same mission of the different Prophets like Isḥâq, Ya'qûb (Jacob), Lûṭ, Nûḥ, Dâ'ûd, Sulaymân, 'Ayyûb, Ismâ'îl, Idrîs, Dhû al-Kifl, Dhû al-Nûn (Yûnus), Zakariyyâ and concludes by making

this very significant and unequivocal statement in *'âyah* 92 that all these Prophets constitute a single community of the same faith. The *'âyah* runs as:

﴿إن هذه أمتكم أمة وٰحدة وأنا ربكم فاعبدون﴾ (٢١ : ٩٢)

"Verily this community (of faith, religion) of yours is the same community; and I am your Lord. Therefore worship Me." (21:92)

Thus the reference to Ibrâhîm, along with the other Prophets, was made repeatedly at Makka. No distinction was made in favour of any one of them. It was also at Makka that all the fundamental differences that exist between Islam on the one hand and Judaism and Christianity on the other were enunciated. Thus the Jews' view that Jesus was not a Prophet but an impostor and the Christians' belief that he was not a man but an incarnation of God were simultaneously and equally strongly denied. Again, the concept of a son or sons for God, held by both the Jews and Christians, was rejected in no unmistakable terms. Further, the Jews' outrageous insinuation against Mary was categorically dismissed. It was also pointed out, contrary to the views of both the Jews and the Christians, that on the Day of Judgement every person would be responsible for his own acts, that he would be singly and individually accountable to God and that neither race, nor ancestry nor any general atonement by any being would be of any avail.[1] In all these respects what followed at Madina was only an elaboration of these points.

(B) *ḤANÎF* IN THE MAKKAN PASSAGES

Similarly the term *ḥanîf* occurs first in the Makkan passages of the Qur'ân. As Bell notes, it is used 12 times in the Qur'ân, 10 times in the singular form and 2 times in the plural; but he seems to convey an impression that all these 12 mentions of the word are in the Madinan passages. This is not at all the case. In fact, out of the 12 times, exactly its half, i.e., six times, we find it mentioned in the Makkan *surahs*. These are:

10:105 (*sûrat Yûnus*)
16:120 (*sûrat al-Naḥl*)
16:123 (*sûrat al-Naḥl*)
30:30 (*sûrat al-Rûm*)
6:79 (*sûrat al-'An'âm*)
6:161 (*sûrat al-'An'âm*)

Chronologically, the earliest mention of the term seems to be in 30: 30

1. See *sûrah* 112 and 19:16-35, 80, 88-93; 99:6-8; 101:6-11.

(*sûrat al-Rûm*) where it is clearly set against *shirk* or polytheism. For, in the previous *'âyahs* 20-29 the instances of the creation of man, of sexes and of various natural phenomena by God are cited to bring home the theme of His existence and absolute unity and the need for worshipping Him alone. Then a direct exhortation is made to do so in 30: 30 as follows:

﴿ فأقم وجهك للدين حنيفاً فطرت الله التى فطر الناس عليها ... ﴾ (٣٠ : ٣٠)

"So set your countenance for the *dîn* (faith) as a *ḥanîf* — the original nature on which Allah created man." (30:30)

The original state (*fiṭrah*) spoken of here clearly refers not to what is often called "natural religion", but to the purity of mind and heart at birth, unaffected by external influences or acquired habits and thoughts — unadulterated devotion and resignation to Allah alone. The meaning is made further clear in the *'âyahs* that immediately follow where man is asked to turn to God alone, to seek His protection, pray to Him and not to associate any partner with him.

Similarly the statement in 10:105 is very early. Here again the term is used as an antonym of polytheism. The early date of the passage is indicated by the context as well as by the immediately preceding and succeeding *'âyahs*. Thus in 10:104 Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) is asked to clarify the nature of his faith. This is done obviously in response to the doubts and enquiries of the Makkan polytheists. And in *'âyah* 106 the meaning of *ḥanîf* is elucidated. The passage, 10:104-106, runs as follows:

﴿ قل يـٰأيها الناس إن كنتم فى شك من دينى فلا أعبد الذين تعبدون من دون الله ولكن أعبد الله الذى يتوفـٰكم وأمرت أن أكون من المؤمنين * وأن أقم وجهك للدين حنيفا ولا تكونن من المشركين * ولا تدع من دون الله ما لا ينفعك ولا يضرك فإن فعلت فإنك إذاً من الظـٰلمين ﴾

"Say O men, if you are in doubt about my faith (*dîn*), then (note that) I do not worship those whom you worship instead of Allah; but I worship Allah Who causes you to die; and I have been commanded that I should be of the believers; and that you set your countenance for the *dîn* as a *ḥanîf* and in no wise be of the polytheists. And do not call, apart from Allah, on that which neither benefits nor harms you. If you do, you will certainly be of the wrongdoers." (10:104-106).

The reference to those objects of worship, i.e. the idols, that had no power to do good or evil is another internal evidence of the Makkan situation in which the passage was revealed.

In the same sense and in a similar context the term is used in 6: 79. Indeed this section of the *sûrah* starts with its *'âyah* 71 which is an inter-

rogation signifying denial: "Shall we call, besides Allah, on others that can do us neither good nor harm?" The succeeding *'âyahs* then narrate Ibrâhîm's rejection of the unreal gods leading to his declaration, in *'âyah* 79 as follows:

﴿إني وجّهتُ وجهي للذى فطر السمـٰـوات والأرض حنيفا و ما أنا من المشركين﴾ (٦ : ٧٩)

"I have turned my face to Him Who brought into being the heavens and the earth, as a *ḥanîf*, and I am not a polytheist." (6: 79).

The term occurs again at a later stage of the *sûrah* in its *'âyah* 161. Here also the context signifies that the passage was revealed at Makka. The preceding *'âyahs* 156-158 specially address the Arabs, or rather the Makkans, telling them that they should accept the guidance because they could no longer plead that whereas the Jews and Christians had each been given a book, none had been given to them (the Arabs), adding that now that they had been given a Book (Qur'ân), should they still be waiting for further "signs" or angels or God Himself to descend to them? This is followed, in *'âyahs* 159-160, by the statement that the Prophet had nothing to do with "those who created divisions in their religion and became sects" and that everyone would get just reward for what he did. '*Âyah* 161 then asks the Prophet to declare:

﴿قل إنني هدىٰـنى ربّى إلى صرٰط مستقيم دينا قيـمًا ملة إبرٰهيم حنيفا وما كان من المشركين﴾ (٦ : ١٦١)

"Say: As for me, my Lord has guided me to a straight path — a correct *dîn,* the way of Ibrâhîm as a *ḥanîf*, and he was not a polytheist." (6:161).

The allusion to "those who create divisions in their religion" etc. may mean, as the commentators point out,[1] the Jews and Christians who had each received a Book, or it may mean generally those who cause divisions in their religion by making innovations or in other ways. But even if the allusion is taken to be to the Jews and Christians, it would not be a departure from the context; for the Makkan opposition had been alleging that the Prophet was giving out what he was being prompted by some of his Christian and Jewish confidants. It would therefore be very appropriate to point out that he had nothing to do with them.

The other two Makkan mentions of the term *ḥanîf* occur in 16: 120 and 16:123. In fact all the four *'âyahs* of this passage form a distinct unit in which, again, the emphasis is on monotheism and rejection of all shades of polytheism. The passage runs as follows:

1. See for instance Al-Qurṭubî, *Tafsîr*, VII, 149-150.

﴿إن إبرٰهيم كان أمة قانتا لله حنيفا ولم يك من المشركين * شاكرا لأنعمه اجتبٰــه وهدٰــه إلى صرٰط مستقيم * وءاتينٰــه فِي الدنيا حسنة وإنه في الأَخرة لمن الصٰــلحين * ثم أوحينا إليك أن اتبع ملة إبرٰهيم حنيفا وما كان من المشركين﴾ (٦: ١٢٠-١٢٣)

"Ibrâhîm was indeed a model, devoutly obedient to Allah as a *ḥanîf*, and was not a polytheist — thankful for His favours. He (Allah) chose him (as His Prophet) and guided him to a straight way. And We gave him good in this world; and in the hereafter he will be (in the ranks) of the righteous. Then We revealed to you that you follow the religion of Ibrâhîm, as a *ḥanîf*, and he was not a polytheist." (16:120-123.)

Before passing on to the Madinan passages the points illustrted by the Makkan passages may be recapitulated. First and foremost, it is clear that the reference to *ḥanîf* as well as to the message of Ibrâhîm was made at Makka, long before the migration to Madina. Second, in all the six instances of its use in the Makkan *sûrahs* the term *ḥanîf* has been used in the sense of an absolute monotheist who rejected all shades of polytheism. Third, in at least two of these six places, i.e., in 30:30 and 10:105, the word has been used without any reference to Ibrâhîm. This means that the word has been used in a generic sense of a monotheist and, obviously, in the sense in which it was generally understood by the audience. There is thus no question of the Qur'ân's, and therefore of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) putting a new and unusual sense on the word. Fourth, though in the four other places Ibrâhîm has been cited as a model monotheist, there has been no attempt whatsoever to relegate any other Prophet to a secondary position, nor is there any suggestion that their teachings differed in any essential respect from those of Ibrâhîm. While emphasis has been laid on Ibrâhîm understandahly because his memories were specially cherished by the immediate listeners, the Arabs, the Jews and the Chistians, the identity and continuity of the messages of all the Prophets have been unmistakably pointed out at the same time, as is evidenced by 6:83-90 which comes immediately after a reference to Ibrâhîm as a *ḥanîf* and which has been mentioned above.

(C) *ḤANÎF* IN THE MADINAN PASSAGES

What followed at Madina was only an elaboration of these points and principles. The Madinan statements are of course made more often in the context of the position of the Jews and the Christians; but the same emphasis on absolute monotheism, the same reiteration of the identity and continuity of the messages of all the Prophets and the same generic use of the term *ḥanîf* are as clear here as in the Makkan *sûrahs*. As in the case of the Makkan passages so also in those of the Madinan, in two out of the six places the

term *ḥanîf* has been used in a generic sense and in the plural without any reference to Ibrâhîm.

One such use is in 22:30-31 which runs as follows:

﴿ . . . فاجتنبوا الرجس من الأوثـــن واجتنبوا قول الزور * حنفاء للّه غير مشركين به . . . ﴾ (٢٢ : ٣٠-٣١)

"... Hence steer clear of the filth of idols (polytheism) and shun telling falsehood (about Allah) — being *ḥunafâ'* for Allah, without associating others with Him." (22:30-31)

The generic use of the term as well as the emphasis on monotheism are unmistakable here. It is also noteworthy that the concluding phrase "without associating others with Him" is an elucidation of and in apposition to the expression *ḥunafâ' lillâh* (حنفاء لله).

The other generic use of the term without any reference to Ibrâhîm is in 98:5 which runs as follows:

﴿ وما أُمِرُوا إلا ليعبدوا الله مخلصين له الدين حنفاء . . . ﴾

"And they had not been commanded except to worship Allah, being sincerely and exclusively devoted to Him as *ḥunafâ'*..."

Here again the term *ḥunafâ'* is in apposition to the expression:"being sincerely and exclusively devoted to Him."

In the remaining four Madinan passages the term is of course used in connection with Ibrâhîm; but the same sense of an absolute monotheist and the same uncompromising rejection of polytheism are explicit throughout. At these four places the statements are made in the context of dialogues with the "People of the Book", more particularly the Jews. The most noteworthy point in these passages is that Ibrâhîm is cited not for the purpose of claiming the Arabs' exclusive affinity with him nor for asserting any precedence or superiority over the teachings of Moses and Jesus, but for illustrating, first, the inconsistency of the claims of the Jews and Christians themselves that they were bearers of the true Abrahamic tradition and, secondly, to contradict their assertions that Ibrâhîm himself was a "Jew" or "Christian" and that none would attain salvation and enter paradise except those who became Jews or Christians.[1] As against such claims it was pointed out that while they called upon the others to become either Jews or Christians, they themselves were irreconcilably divided, the Jews alleging that the Christians had nothing to stand upon, and the Christians claiming that the Jews had nothing to stand

1. See for instance Q. 2:111.

upon, though they both studied the Book. It is also made very plain that the underlying issue is monotheism and the identity and continuity of the messages of all the Prophets of God. A look at the passages makes these very clear.

The statement at 2:135 runs as follows:

﴿وقالوا كونوا هودا أو نصٰرىٰ تهتدوا قل بل ملة إبرٰهيم حنيفا وما كان من المشركين﴾ (٢ :١٣٥)

"And they say: Be Jews or Christians, you will get guidance. Say (to them, follow): Rather the religion of Ibrâhîm, the *ḥanîf*; and he was none of a polytheist."(2:135)

This statement comes as a sequel to a rather detailed account of Moses and his efforts to bring home the theme of monotheism to the Children of Israel (*'âyahs* 47-134). In the course of this long account four points are specially stressed. First, it is made very clear that the argument is directed not against the Jews and Christians in general nor as their being followers of Moses and Jesus, but against the particular notions and practices that were adopted in the names of those Prophets. Hence it is stated unequivocally: "Those among the Jews and Christians who sincerely believe in God and in the Day of Judgement, and do good deeds, they would have their rewards from their Lord and would have nothing to fear nor any cause to grieve" (*'âyah* 2:62).[1] Second, it is pointed out that it was only a section of the Jews who consciously and knowingly tampered with the Scripture, while the uninformed section of them merely followed their desires and whims without being really aware of what the Scripture teaches (*'âyahs* 2:75,78). Third, it is stated in the same strain that the message contained in the Book of Moses did not stop with him, for God followed it up by sending other Prophets including Jesus; but nonetheless the Jews, when they found that the divine message was not in accord with their likes and dislikes, they belied some of the Prophets and killed some others (*'âyah* 2:87).[2] In this connection the error in the claim that none but a Jew or a Christian would enter paradise is pointed out and it is reiterated that only he who submits wholeheartedly to God and does good deeds will receive His rewards (*'âyahs* 2:111-112). Also

1. The text runs as follows:

﴿إن الذين ءامنوا والذين هادوا والنصٰرىٰ والصّٰبِـٔين من ءامن بالله واليوم الأخر وعمل صٰلحا فلهم أجرهم عند ربهم ولا خوف عليهم ولا هم يحزنون﴾

2. The text runs as follows:

﴿ولقد ءاتينا موسى الكتٰب وقفينا من بعده بالرسل وءاتينا عيسى ابن مريم البينٰت وأيدنٰه بروح القدس أفكلما جاءكم رسول بما لا تهوىٰ أنفسكم استكبرتم ففريقا كذبتم وفريقا تقتلون﴾

the notion of God's son, common to both the Jews and the Christians, is strongly rebutted (*'ayahs* 2:116-117). Finally, referring specifically to Ibrâhîm and Ya'qûb, with whom the Jews and Christians decalred their affinity, it was pointed out that they both had enjoined upon their progeny and successors to worship the One Only God and to submit to Him wholeheartedly (*'âyahs* 2:132-133). And in continuation of this argument *'âyah* 135 states: "They say, be Jews or Christians, you will get guidance. Say: Rather the religion of Ibrâhîm, the *ḥanîf*, and he was none of a polytheist."

The whole discussion here, as elsewhere, revolves round the question of monotheism. There is no claim to affinity with Ibrâhîm solely and exclusively for the Arabs or for the followers of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ). On the contrary, the burden of the whole discussion is that, since the Jews and the Christians themselves claimed affinity with Ibrâhîm, it only behoved them to adhere strictly to the monotheism he taught and typified. That is why whenever he is described as a *ḥanîf* it is emphasized that he was no polytheist. There is no pretension to priority or superiority, nor any lowering of the Prophets of the Jews and the Christians, nor any suggestion that the teachings of one Prophet differed from those of another. The identity and continuity of the messages of all the Prophets are thus emphasized in the immediately succeeding *'âyah* 2:136 as follows:

﴿قولوا ءامنا بالله وما أنزل إلينا ومآ أنزل إلى إبرٰهيم وإسمٰعيل وإسحٰق ويعقوب والأسباط ومآ أوتىَ موسىٰ وعيسىٰ وما أُوتىَ النبيون من ربهم لا نفرق بين أحد منهم ونحن له مسلمون﴾ (٢: ١٣٦)

"Say ye: We believe in Allah and in what has been sent dawn to us and in what was sent down to Ibrâhîm, Ismâ'îl, Isḥâq and Ya'qûb and the Tribes, and in that given to Mûsâ and 'Îsâ and that given to (all) the Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between one and another of them; and to Him we surrender (completely)." (2:136)

That the reference to Ibrâhîm as a *ḥanîf* was made in order to illustrate the inconsistency of the Jews' and Christians' claim of affinity with him, because of their obvious non-compliance with true monotheism, is further evident from the two other uses of the term at 3:67 and 3:95. In this *sûrah* the argument is developed from *'âyah* 33 wherein mention is first made of 'Âdam, Nûḥ and Ibrâhîm and the family of 'Imrân as the recepients of Allah's special favours. This is followed by an account, in *'âyahs* 35 through 62, of the birth and mission of 'Îsâ, in the course of which it is specially stressed that he had declared: "It is Allah Who is my Lord and your Lord; so worship Him. This

is a way that is straight."[1] It is further emphasized that the creation of Îsâ was like the creation of 'Âdam as an evidence of Allah's will and omnipotence.[2] Therefore the unusual birth of 'Îsâ should be no reason for deifying him. This is followed by a fervent appeal to both the Christians and the Jews in *'âyah* 3:64 as follows:

﴿قل يـٰأهل الكتـٰب تعالوا إلى كلمة سواء بيننا وبينكم ألّا نعبد إلا الله ولا نشرك به شيـئـا ولا يتخذ بعضنا بعضا أربابا من دون الله...﴾ (٣:٦٤)

"Say: O People of the Book, come to common terms as between us and you; that we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with Him and that we take not from among ourselves Lords and Patrons leaving aside Allah..." (3:64)

Next the unreasonableness of the claim that Ibrâhîm was a Jew or Christian is pointed out by drawing attention to the simple fact that the *Torah* and the *Injîl* which the Jews and the Christians claim to be the sources of their beliefs were not revealed till long after Ibrâhîm (*'âyahs* 3:65,66). Hence if they really meant to identify themselves with him, they could consistently do so only by conforming to absolute monotheism; for, decalres *'âyah* 3:67:

﴿ما كان إبرٰهيمُ يهوديّا ولا نصرانيّا ولكن كان حنيفا مسلما وما كان من المشركين﴾ (٣:٦٧)

"Ibrâhîm was not a Jew, nor a Christian, but a *ḥanîf* (a person of true and upright faith in Allah), a Muslim (one who surrenders himself completely to Allah alone); and he was none of a polytheist." (3:67)

The argument is continued in the succeeding *'âyah* as follows:

﴿إن أولى الناس بإبرٰهيم للّذين اتبعوه ...﴾ (٣:٦٨)

"The most deserving of men to claim identity with Ibrâhîm are indeed those who follow him (truly)....." (3:68)

The same theme of monotheism and the same emphasis on the need to follow the way of Ibrâhîm, if one really meant to identify oneself with him, are the subject matter of the *'âyahs* that follow the one quoted above till *'âyah* 3:95 which states:

﴿قل صدق اللّهُ فاتّبعوا ملة إبرٰهيم حنيفا وما كان من المشركين﴾ (٣:٩٥)

"Say: Allah speaks the truth. Hence follow the religion of Ibrâhîm, the *ḥanîf*, and he was none of a polytheist." (3:95).

In all the three above-noted passages (i.e., 2:135; 3:67 and 3:95) the reference to Ibrâhîm as a *ḥanîf* has been made in response to the claims of the

1. Q. 3:51.
2. Q. 3:59.

"People of the Book " themselves that it was they who belonged to the community of Ibrâhîm. They are therefore called upon to follow strictly the way (*millat*) of Ibrâhîm if they really meant to be true to their claim. No pretension to priority over or superiority to the messages of Mûsâ and 'Îsâ is made in any place, nor is there any suggestion that the right to claim identity with Ibrâhîm belonged exclusively to the Arabs. Further, the equality of all the Prophets and the identity of their teachings have been emphasized all along.

The other mention of the word *ḥanîf* occurs in 4:125 (*sûrat al-Nisâ'*). Here also the theme is monotheism and the emphasis is on total rejection of all shades of polytheism. This theme starts specifically with *'âyah* 116 of the *sûrah* which states: "Allah forgives not the sin of joining others with Him. He may forgive the other sins of anyone whom He pleases. Whoever associates others with Allah strays far away indeed."[1] Then *'âyahs* 117-120 state that it is the devil who dupes many into polytheism and causes them to entertain vain hopes and baseless expectations. The hopes and expectations alluded to here were clearly understood by the audience and are indeed spelt out elsewhere in the Qur'ân. These were the pagan Arabs' claim that they would not be resurrected after death for final judgement[2] and that their deities would in any case intercede with Allah on their behalf,[3] and the claims of the "People of the Book" that they were the "sons and loved ones of Allah"[4] , that they would not in any case suffer hell-fire except for a limited number of days,[5] and that none would enter paradise except a Jew or a Christian.[6] It is with reference to such notions that *'âyahs* 121-124 of the *sûrah* state, addressing the pagan Arabs as well as the People of the Book, that "neither your desires nor those of the Poeple of the Book would be of any avail."[7] At the same time

1. Q. 4:116. The text runs as follows:
﴿إن الله لا يغفر أن يشرك به ويغفر ما دون ذلك لمن يشاء ومن يشرك بالله فقد ضل ضللا بعيدا﴾

2. Q. 16:38, which states: ﴿وأقسموا بالله جهد أيمنهم لا يبعث الله من يموت...﴾ "They swear by their strongest oaths by God that God shall not resurrect those who die". See also Q. 72:7.

3. See for instance 6:94; 10:18 and 39:43.

4. Q. 5:80= ﴿وقالت اليهود والنصرى نحن أبنؤا الله وأحبؤه...﴾ "The Jews and the Christians said: We are sons of God and His loved ones".

5. Q. 2:80 & 3:24 which run respectively as: ﴿وقالوا لن تمسنا النار إلا أياما معدودة﴾ and ﴿قالوا لن تمسنا النار إلا أياما معدودات﴾ "And they said: They fire shall nor touch us but for a number of days".

6. Q. 2:111- ﴿وقالوا لن يدخل الجنة الا من كان هودا أو نصرى﴾ "And they said: None shall enter paradise unless he be a Jew or a Christian".

7. Q. 4:123- ﴿ليس بأمانيكم ولا أماني أهل الكتب من يعمل سوءا يجز به...﴾

the principle of individual responsibility and accountability is stressed by saying that whoever does a good deed and has faith will get his reward and whoever does anything wrong will be duly requited by Allah.[1] Hence, states *'âyah* 4:125, the best way is to surrender one's whole self to Allah, to do good deeds and to follow the way of Ibrâhîm, as a *ḥanîf*. The *'âyah* runs as follows:

﴿ومن أحسن دينا ممن أسلم وجهه لله وهو محسن واتبع ملة إبرٰهيم حنيفا . . .﴾

"Who can be better in religion than the one who submits his countenance (one's whole self) to Allah, performs good deeds and follows the religion of Ibrâhîm, as a *ḥanîf*?..." (4:125).

Thus an anlysis of the twelve Qur'ânic passages (six Makkan and six Madinan) wherein the term *ḥanîf* occurs decisively demonstrates the untenability of the Jeffery-Bell theory which says that the Prophet had recourse to the expression *ḥanîf*, put a new sense of monotheist upon it and related it to the Abrahamic religion only when differences developed between him and the Jews after his migration to Madina and with a view to breaking away from both Judaism and Christianity and to winning over to his cause the pagan Arabs who cherished Ibrâhîm's memories. It has been seen that the use of the term *ḥanîf* and the reference to Ibrâhîm's message were made at Makka, at a very early stage of the Prophet's mission and long before the migration to Madina. It was also at Makka that departures from the fundamental and central doctrines of Judaism and Christianity were made. The main point at issue was monotheism. It was on this issue that the doctrines of the Trinity, of son-ship of God and of incarnation and divinity of 'Îsâ were discarded right from the beginning and the rejection was reiterated throughout the Makkan and the Madinan periods. Indeed it was in the sense of a strict and uncompromising monotheist that the term *ḥanîf* has been used all through the Makkan and the Madinan periods. Bell's suggestion that the Prophet put a new sense of the very "antithesis of polytheist" upon the term is an indirect admission that it has been used everywhere in the Qur'ân in the sense of an absolute monotheist. That no uncommon and strange sense was put upon it is shown by its generic use, without any reference to Ibrâhîm, in both the Makkan and Madinan passages. It is also quite unreasonable to assume that the Prophet put a new meaning on the term just for the sake of breaking away from the Jews and the Christians and for winning over the

1. Q. 4:122-124.

pagan Arabs to his cause; for such an unusual application of the word was more likely to create confusion and evoke criticism and misunderstanding by the Prophet's opponents. Yet, neither the Quraysh opponents nor those from the People of the Book appear to have taken any objection to the use made of the word in the Qur'ân. And imagine the situation if someone in England suddenly ventured to use the word "fool" in its directly opposite sense of "wise", applying it to an English historical figure and calling upon Englishmen to take from him that meaning for the word in respect of that national hero!

The fact is that neither was the term *ḥanîf* used in the Qur'ân in a novel sense directly opposite to the meaning in which it had hitherto been understood by the Arabs, nor was reference to the Abrahamic tradition made with a view to breaking away from Judaism and Chrsitianity. The Madinan reference to Ibrâhîm as *ḥanîf* was made in response to the claims of affinity with him made by the "People of the Book" themselves. It was plainly pointed out that far from being a Jew or a Christian, Ibrâhîm was a *ḥanîf*, an absolute monotheist, and not a polytheist. Hence they were asked to adhere to the *millat* of Ibrâhîm, if they were true to their claims. This is very significant. It means that the Qur'ân, and therefore Muḥammad (ﷺ), viewed the beliefs and practices of the Jews and Christians of the time as antithetical to monotheism and as manifest departures from the teachings of Ibrâhîm and the other Prophets. It also means that the position was just the reverse of what the Jeffery-Bell theory suggests. The Qur'ânic evidence does in no way show that Muḥammad (ﷺ), with a view to avoiding the criticism that he had borrowed the concept of monotheism and other ideas from Judaism and Christianity, traced his teachings to an "earlier" source, the teachings of Ibrâhîm. On the contrary, the evidence is that, so far as the Jews and the Christians were concerned, the reference to Ibrâhîm as a *ḥanîf* was made in response to their claim of affinity with him and in view of the obvious inconsistency of their beliefs and practices with monotheism and the teachings of Ibrâhîm. That is why it was repeatedly pointed out that he was none of a polytheist, that he was neither a Jew nor a Christian. This, together with the open call made to the "People of the Book" to follow the *millat* of Ibrâhîm or, at least, to agree to a "common" formula, namely, to worship Allah alone and not to set any partner with Him, indisputably demonstrate that the issue was not between an "earlier" and, so to say, a "purer" or first-class monotheism on the one hand, and a later or second-class monotheism on the other.

The issue was clearly between monotheism and a negation of it. In its resort to the expression *ḥanîf* and to the Abrahamic tradition at Madina the Qur'ân was not at all adopting any defensive stance as against the Jews' and Chrsitians' criticism of Islam; it was simply leading the onslaught on them on account of *their* claims of identity with Ibrâhîm and, therefore, on the inconsistency of that claim with the obvious negation of monotheism in their beliefs and practices.

CHAPTER XV

THE ORIENTALISTS AND THE *ḤANÎFS:* II. WATT'S VIEWS

Watt's views about the *ḥanîfs* are contained chiefly in his *Muḥammad at Mecca* (1953)[1], his article on *ḥanîf* in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (1966, 1986)[2] and his *Muḥammad's Mecca* (1988).[3] His statements are based essentially on the Jeffery-Bell assumptions and on a further assumption made by Hilmi Omar Bey. The latter, shortly after the publication of Bell's article on the subject, came out in the columns of *The Moslem World*, generally supporting his views and adding that the persons to whom the term *ḥanîf* is applied in the histories and the traditions ill-suit the description of the term in the Qur'ân; that they originally did neither bear such title nor ever go out in search of Ibrâhîm's religion, but that this title was given them by later exegetes and traditionists simply to illustrate and give substance to the Qur'ânic use of the term.[4]

How closely Watt reproduces his predecessors' views may be seen from the following comparative table:

(a) Bell stated that the *ḥanîfs* were "no sect or party of historical people" but the supposed "followers of the ideal original of Arab religion."	(a) Watt reproduces the same view, quoting the very words of Bell.[5]
(b) Taking from Jeffery, but somewhat modifying his theory, Bell suggested that the word *ḥanîf* is Syriac in origin, that it was first taken in its plural form and that it meant "heathen".	(b) Watt adopts and advances the same view.[6]

1. Pp. 162-164 (Excursus C).
2. *E.I.*, III, New edn. 1986, pp. 165-166.
3. Pp. 37-38.
4. *M.W.*, 1932, pp. 72-75.
5. *M. at M.*, p. 162.
6. *E.I.*, III, 1986, p. 166, col. 2.

(c) Bell suggested that the Qur'ân put a new and directly opposite meaning of monotheist upon the term.

(c) Watt adopts more or less the same view, only modifying it in that the Qur'ân, according to him, "developed" a "secondary meaning" of a monotheist for the term as used in some Aramaic circles.[1]

(d) Taking his cue from Jeffery, Bell suggested that the Qur'ânic use of *ḥanîf* and the resort to the Abrahamic tradition were made at Madina when the Prophet's relations with the Jews became strained and in order to break away from Judaism and Christianity.

(d) Watt reproduces in effect the same thesis saying that the Qur'ânic concept of *ḥanîfiyyah* "is closely linked with the resistance of the Muslims to the intellectual criticisms of Muḥammad's religion by Jews and Christians"—that it was "part of the Qur'ânic apologetic against Judaism and Christianity."[2]

(e) Again, taking his cue from Jeffery, Bell suggested that the Prophet's religion was initially even called *ḥanîfiyyah* and that the technical use of *Islam* and *Muslim* was not made before 2 A.H.

(e) Watt reiterates the same view adding that such technical use of *Islam* and *Muslim* was made even later than 2 H.[3]

(f) Supporting Bell's views on the subject H.O. Bey added that it was the later Muslim historians who mentioned several persons as *ḥanîfs* to illustrate the Qur'ânic use of the term; but they themselves did not bear that designation.

(f) Watt reproduces and builds on the same view.[4]

Now, the utter untenability of the main thesis that resort to *ḥanîf* and the

1. *E.I.*, III, 1986, p. 116, Col. 2.
2. *M. at M.*, 162; *E.I.*, III, 1986, p. 165; *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 37, 38.
3. *E.I.*, III, 1986, p. 165, Col. 2: *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 38.
4. *M. at M.*, 162; *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 37; *E.I.*, III, 1986, p. 166.

Abrahamic tradition made "its appearance", as Watt puts it, "early in the Madinan period when the Prophet's relation with the Jews became strained"[1] and that the concept of *ḥanîfiyyah* "is closely linked with the resistance of the Muslims to the intellectual criticisms of Muḥammad's religion by Jews and Christians",[2] has been shown above. It has been seen that the term *ḥanîf* and the reference to Ibrâhîm were used at Makka, from the very early stage of the Prophet's mission, and not at all in response to Jewish and Christian criticisms. On the contrary, at Madina such references to *ḥanîf* and to the Abrahamic tradition were made in response to the claims of identity with Ibrâhîm made by the "People of the Book" themselves and in order to point out the inconsistency of that claim with the lack of monotheism in their beliefs and practices. Nor is there any question of the Muslims' defending themselves, as Watt puts it, "by saying that their religion is the pure worship of God, revealed by Him to previous prophets and to Muḥammad",[3] because of the "hostile suggestion that most Qur'ânic ideas came from Judaism and Christianity."[4] For, the reference to *ḥanîfiyyah* and the Abrahamic tradition was made at Madina not as against any such suggestion of the Jews and the Christians, but as against their obvious non-compliance with the requisites of monotheism. Nor is it true that "most Qur'ânic ideas came from Judaism and Christianity." The orientalists themselves, and Watt in particular, admit that Muḥammad (ﷺ) did not himself read the Judaeo-Christian scriptures. It has also been shown[5] that the theory of his having been taught the lessons in Christianity by private tutors or of his having picked up information from the ordinary Jews and Christians whom he chanced to meet is equally untenable and unreasonable. Also, the fundamental teachings of the Qur'ân differred from those of Judaism and Christianity right from the beginning; and denunciation of the latter was very pointedly made at Makka. Even the Madinan references to *ḥanîf* and the Abrahamic tradition give an instructive insight into the Qur'ân's attitude to the Judaism and the Christianity of the day. Hence the prejudice which suggests that most Qur'ânic ideas came from Judaism and Christianity should at once be discarded if one really means to understand, and not to underestimate, Islam. At all events, the thesis that

1. *M. at M.*, 162.
2. *Ibid.*, 163.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 37.
5. *Supra*, Ch. XI, especially secs. III & IV.

resort to *ḥanîfiyyah* and the Abrahamic tradition was made for the first time at Madina, and that too for breaking with Judaism and Christianity, is a totally wrong and calculatedly misleading statement.

In their eagerness to bring home the theme of what is called "the Qur'ânic apologetic against Judaism and Christianity" the orientalists, particularly Watt, fail to see the inconsistency in their assertions. Thus if *ḥanîfiyyah* "must indeed for a time have been the name applied to Muḥammad's religion", and if the "technical use of *Islâm* and *Muslim*" was not made before the end of 2 H., it cannot at the same time be suggested that the concepts of *ḥanîf* and *ḥanîfiyyah* did not come into existence except early in the Madinan period, i.e., around 2 H., when the Prophet allegelly adopted the terms *Islâm* and *Muslim* and also fell out with the Jews and made use of *ḥanîf* and *ḥanîfiyyah* for the first time as against the latter! Yet Watt, following his predecessors, would have his readers take this glaring inconsistency from him!

Again, Watt admits that in "most" cases (in fact always) the Qur'ânic use of the term *ḥanîf* "is contrasted with the idolaters *mushrikûn*)" and that as religion *ḥanîfiyyah* "is contrasted with polytheism" and, as he says, "with the 'corrupted' monotheism of the Jews and Christians."[1] Surely, then, no premise of strained relationship with the Jews is called for to explain the use of the term. The premise, stark polytheism and idolatry existed there at Makka itself, and blatantly enough, to call for a protest against it. It may also be pointed out that the expression "corrupted monotheism of the Jews and Christians" is Watt's own formulation. So far as the Qur'ânic use of *ḥanîf* and *ḥanîfiyyah* as against the "People of the Book" is concerned, it (the Qur'ân) simply did not view them as monotheists so that it called upon them at least to come to a common term of worshipping the only One God and not setting any partner with Him.

The use of *ḥanîf* and *ḥanîfiyyah* was indeed made at Makka and long before the migration and development of differences with the Jews. They were also used interchangeably with *Muslim* and *Islâm*. But it is not at all correct to say that the tecnical use of *Islâm* and *Muslim* started only after 2 H. Making due allowance for Bell's dissection and dating of the Qur'ânic passages, (and it is well worth remembering that even Watt himself does not accept in toto Bell's suggestions in this respect), there still remain many Makkan and early passages of the Qur'ân wherein the two terms are used

1. *E.I.*, III, new edition, 1986, p. 165.

very much technically. In fact there are at least three dozen Makkan passages[1] where one or the other of the two words occurs and where it carries either a technical sense or both the technical and general senses.

The earliest technical use of the term *Muslim* occurs in 68:35-36. This *sûrah* (*al-Qalam*) is very early in the order of revelation, its first four *'âyahs* being considered by the classical Muslim scholars as only the second in the order of revelation, while from the internal evidence it is clear that the rest of the *sûrah* was revealed not much later than its first part, definitely at Makka. The passage runs as follows:

﴿أفنجعل المسلمين كالمجرمين * ما لكم كيف تحكمون﴾(٦٨: ٣٥- ٣٦)

"Shall We then treat the *Muslims* at par with the sinners? What is the matter with you? How (strangely) do you judge?" (68: 35- 36).

This statement is made in rebuttal of the Makkan unbelievers' remarks that if they were at all to be resurrected after death they would get the same respectable and influential position in the hereafter as they enjoyed in the Makkan society.[2]

This passage alone is sufficient to disprove the assumption about the commencement of the technical use of *Muslim* and *Islam*. A few other passages may be cited, however, by way of illustrating not only the early Makkan application of the terms in their technical senses but also in showing (a) that, as in the case of the expression *ḥanîf*, so also in that of *Muslim* (and *Islâm*) it has been used in the sense of an absolute monotheist and in contrast with a polytheist, and (b) that it has been used in respect of all the previous Prophets and their followers.

Some of the relevant passages are:

(1) 15:2 — ﴿رُبَما يود الذين كفروا لو كانوا مسلمين﴾

"Perhaps (often) those who disbelieve would wish if only they had been Muslims."

This statement is made with reference to the state of the unbelievers on the Day of Judgement.

(2) 43:69 — ﴿الذين ءامنوا بـئـايـٰـتنا وكانوا مسلمين﴾

"Those who believed in Our signs and were Muslims..."

The reference here is to the position of the Muslims in the hereafter.

1. See F.A. Bâqi, *Al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li Alfâẓ al-Qur'ân al-Karîm*, under س ل م
2. See for instance *Tafsîr al-Bayḍâwî*, II, Beirut print, 517.

(3) 21:108 — ﴿قل إنما يوحىٰ إليَّ أنما إلـٰـهكم إلـٰـه واحد فهل أنتم مسلمون﴾

"Say: Verily it has been revealed to me that your Lord is only the One God. So are you Muslims (i.e. those who surrender themselves to the One God)?"

(4) & (5) 27:81 and 30: 53 — ﴿... إن تُسمعُ إلا من يؤمن بـئـايـٰـتنا فهم مسلمون﴾

"You can make only those who believe in Our signs listen (to guidance) and so they are Muslims."

The statement is made in the context of the Makkan unbelievers' obstinate opposition.

(6) 41:33 — ﴿ومن أحسن قولا ممن دعا إلى الله وعمل صـٰـلحا وقال إننى من المسلمين﴾

"And who is better in speech than the one who calls men towards Allah and does good deeds and says: 'I am a Muslim'?"

(7) 39:22 — ﴿أفمن شرح الله صدره للإسلام فهو على نور من ربه...﴾

"Is one whose heart Allah has opened to *Islam*, so that he is on a light (enlightenment) from his Lord...".

(8) 11:14 — ﴿فإن لم يستجيبوا لكم فاعلموا أنما أنزل بعلم الله وأن لا إلـٰـه إلا هو فهل أنتم مسلمون﴾

"But if they respond not to you then know that it has been revealed with Allah's knowledge, and that there is no god but He. So are you Muslims?"

This statement is made in the context of a challenge given to the unbelievers of Makka to produce some texts like that of the Qur'ân, if they did not concede it to be Allah's revelation, and their failure to meet the challenge.

(9) 10:72 — ﴿فإن توليتم فما سألتكم من أجر إن أجرى إلا على الله وأمرت أن أكون من المسلمين﴾

"But if you turn back, then (look), no reward have I asked of you. My reward is only with Allah and I have been commanded to be a Muslim."

This statement is put in the mouth of Prophet Nûḥ in his address to his people.

(10) 10:84 — ﴿وقال موسى يـٰـقوم إن كنتم ءامنتم بالله فعليه توكلوا إن كنتم مسلمين﴾

"And Mûsâ said: O my people, if you do believe in Allah, then depend on Him if you are Muslims."

(11) 7:126 — ﴿ربنا أفرغ علينا صبرا وتوفنا مسلمين﴾

"O our Lord, pour on us patience and make us die as Muslims."

This prayer is put in the mouth of the followers of Moses who braved the Pharaoh's oppression and vindictiveness.

(12) 51:3 — ﴿فأخرجنا من كان فيها من المؤمنين * فما وجدنا فيها غير بيت من المسلمين﴾

"Then we evacuated whoever was in there of the believers' but we found not therein

any but one household of the *Muslims*."

This is a statement of the angels in respect of Prophet Lûṭ's people.

It would be noticed that in all the above noted passages the expressions *Islâm* and *Muslim* have been used very much in the technical senses. It should also be noted that nos. 2, 7, 8, 10 and 12 show that the term *Muslim* is coterminous with *Mu'min* and one who has faith in the One Only God; while nos. 9, 10, 11 and 12 make it clear that the previous Prophets and their followers also are designated Muslims. Most important of all, all these are Makkan passages. Hence nothing could be farther from the truth and more misleading than the assertion that the technical use of *Islâm* and *Muslim* began only after the Prophet's migration to Madina and as a reaction to his differences with the Jews. In fact, as already indicated, Watt, following his predecessors, is very inconsistent and confusing in this respect. He would have us believe that previous to the migration to Madina and the development of differences with the Jews the Prophet used *al-ḥanîfiyyah* as the name of his religion. At the same time Watt would have his readers believe that resort to *al-ḥanîfiyyah* and the Abrahamic tradition was made by the Prophet only at Madina after the Prophet had fallen out with the Jews!

This brings us to the question of the existence of actual *ḥanîfs* on the eve of the Prophet's emergence on the scene. Watt states that all "the references to the *ḥanîfs* in the early sources are attempts which illustrate the statements in the Qur'ân and that none of the persons named would have called himself a *ḥanîf* or said he was in search of the *ḥanîfiyya*."[1] Referring to the 12 Qur'ânic passages wherein the term *ḥanîf* occurs but without discussing their contexts Watt further states that there is "not the slightest hint in the Qur'ân about a *ḥanîf* movemnt in the half-century before Islam."[2] Nor is there any evidence, he stresses, "that any of the persons called a *ḥanîf* by scholars ever used this name himself, or was so called by contemporaries... the movement is entirely the creation of second-century Muslim scholars."[3] The early Muslim scholars, according to him, were "trying to give some background to certain Qur'ânic texts, or possibly countering the hostile suggestion that most Qur'ânic ideas came from Judaism and Christianity."[4] The Muslims "are to

1. *M. at M.*, 162; *E.I.*, III, 1986 p. 166, Col. 1.
2. *Muḥammad's Mecca*, 37.
3. *Ibid.*, 38.
4. *Ibid.*, 37.

defend themselves", he states at another place, "by saying that their religion is the pure worship of God, revealed by him to previous prophets and to Muḥammad."[1] Yet, depending clearly upon the names and facts supplied only by the early Muslim scholars, Watt states at the same time that the individuals named "may nevertheless have been feeling their way towards monotheism" and that the very existence of these men affords "an additional illustration of the way in which monotheism was permeating the environment in which Muḥammad grew up..."[2] "The movement and individuals exist but any assertion that some one is a *ḥanîf* (in the Islamic sense) is the work of a later Muslim apologete..."[3]

Thus does Watt, while pointing out that the Qur'ân does not speak of a *ḥanîf* movement as such and while also stating that the *ḥanîf* movement "is entirely the creation of second century Muslim scholars", assert at the same time that the movement and individuals did exist but that the names *ḥanîf* and *al-ḥanîfiyya* are "the work of a later Muslim apologete". The apparent inconsistency or rather the net objection to the terms *ḥanîf* and *al-ḥanîfiyyah* may be easily explained.

Although Goldziher pointed out that the Muslim historians speak only of a few individuals seeking monotheism and not of any movement as such towards monotheism, Sprenger's suggestion that Muḥammad (ﷺ) got his inspiration from those individuals fell in line with the theory that he had borrowed his information from Judaism and Christianity. The idea soon suggested itself that the individuals who went out in search of monotheism themselves imbibed the spirit of monotheism from Judaism and Christianity and that there was a trend or movement towards monotheism fostered by those two religions. Muḥammad (ﷺ) not only borrowed a good deal from those two systems, he also received his impetus for monotheism from the prevailing trend. The sole objection to bringing this theory home was the concept of *al-ḥanîfiyyah* and indeed the reference to the Abrahamic tradition. It thus became necessary to do away with or to dislodge *ḥanîf* and *al-ḥanîfiyyah*. Hence the onslaught on them, just as the orientalists make the onslaught on the Abrahamic tradition itself.

To achieve their objective the orientalists have made a three-pronged

1. *E.I.*, III, 1986, p. 165.
2. *M. at M.*, 163.
3. *E.I.*, III, 1986, p. 166, Col. 2.

manoeuvre. It has been attempted to show that the term *ḥanîf* is of foreign origin and that even if current in Arabia it bore the meaning of "heathen" or follower of the old Arab native religion. Secondly, it has been suggested that Muḥammad (ﷺ), when he fell out with the Jews at Madina, traced his teachings to those of Ibrâhîm and also applied the term *ḥanîf* to him by putting the opposite sense of "monotheist" on it in order to identify his religion with the "assumed pure original of the Arab religion", that the *ḥanîfs* "were no sect or party of historical people, but the product of Muḥammad's unresting mind." These two manoeuvres were made mainly by Bell, taking his cue from Jeffery. Reiterating Bell's views, indeed quoting his very words, Watt makes the third manoeuvre. He extends the theory of Qur'ânic apology against Jewish and Christian criticism to the second-century Muslim historians alleging that they made up the stories of the *ḥanîfs* or applied the title *ḥanîf* to them to give support to the Qur'ânic apology, adding that the movement and individuals did exist, which provide an evidence of the permeation of monotheism in the environment in which Muḥammad (ﷺ) grew up. Thus, in effect, Watt grafts Sprenger's theory upon Bell's views or rather makes an amalgam of the views of Sprenger and Bell with the theory of Judaeo-Christian origin of Islam. The different elements in the compound are, however, ill-absorbed, each retaining its identity. Hence the confusing and inconsistent statements that the movement is "entirely the creation of second-century Muslim scholars" and that "the movement and individuals did exist", etc.

The assumption underlying these manoeuvres, namely, that a trend towards monotheism was fostered by Judaism and Christianity is as wrong as is the assumption that Muḥammad (ﷺ) drew his information and ideas from those two systems. The utter untenability of this latter assumption has been shown earlier.[1] That the two systems did not inspire a spirit of monotheism in the enquireres mentioned by the early historians is amply demonstrated by the fact, also noted by them at the same time, that in general those enquirers were not impressed by the two systems when these were explained to them by the savants and did not embrace either. Indeed a true historical perspective presupposes the insufficiency and inability of the prevailing systems to satisfy the curiosity of the inquisitive souls; for it is only such a situation which explains the emergence and success of a new system. The desire for

1. *Supra*, Chapter XI.

finding the original religion of Ibrâhîm was produced not by the ideas of Judaism and Christianty percolating into the environment but by a revulsion against the gross idolatry and polytheism of the time on the one hand, and by an awareness and continuance of the Abrahamic tradition which, despite the degeneration of the Arabs into idolatry, had kept alive the name and concept of Allah as the Supreme Lord, the sanctity of the Ka'ba and a number of rites connected with it. For, by no stretch of the imagination could it be suggested that these latter concepts and institutions were produced by the influence of Judaism and Christianity or that these did not exist prior to the emergence of Islam.

It is also an unwarranted assertion that the early Muslim historians fabricated the stories of the *ḥanîfs* or invented that title for them in order to give substance to the Qur'ânic statements. There is no evidence to substantiate the allegation. In making this allegation the orientalists in fact make two insinuations against the historians, that of misunderstanding the Qur'ânic reference to *ḥanîf* and that of fabrication. As Watt himself notes, the Qur'ân in no way speaks of a *ḥanîf* movement as such. Hence there was no need for the historians for finding out the *ḥanîfs* or for making up their stories. Nor is it correct to say that the individuals who sought the original Abrahamic religion were not known by the name of *ḥanîfs* or did not call themselves such. The sources clearly speak of their being known as *ḥanîfs* and also quote their own statements to the effect that they were seeking *al-ḥanîfiyyah*, the original religion of Ibrâhîm. Watt's rejection of this evidence, particularly the poems and statements attributed to those individuals, is as unjustified as it is inconsistent on his part; for in other matters he very much accepts the evidence of the poems as reflecting the actual state of affairs. In any case, there can be no doubt that the term *ḥanîf* was current in pre-Islamic Arabia, as the orientalists themselves admit; and it was used in the sense of one who subscribed to the original Abrahamic religion. The Qur'ân uses the term only in its generally accepted and understood sense, and not in an opposite and strange meaning. Thus the mere prevalence of the term in pre-Islamic Arabia is a decisive evidence that it was used with reference to a particular type of individuals. Therefore to say that none was known or called by that title is an absurd proposition.

Again, the theory of Qur'ânic apology against Judaeo-Christian criticism on which the insinuation against the Muslim historians is based is, as already pointed out, totally unfounded and untenable. To sum up the facts: (a) The

reference to Ibrâhîm, indeed to all the previous Prophets, was made at Makka, and not for the first time at Madina. (b) It was also at Makka that the expression *ḥanîf* was used in its generic sense and also with reference to Ibrâhîm and in the sense of an absolute monotheist. (c) And in so far as reference to Ibrâhîm as *ḥanîf* was made at Madina and in relation to the "People of the Book", it was done in reply to their claim of identiy with Ibrâhîm and in order to point out the inconsistency of that claim with their conspicuous polytheistic beliefs and practices. It was very pertinently pointed out that Ibrâhîm was not a polytheist, so that if they were true to their claim they should comply with the requisites of monotheism. This is all the more clear from the open call made to them to come to a common platform, that of worshipping Allah alone and not associating anyone with Him. There was thus no question of an apology or defensive posture on the part of the Qur'ân. So far as the Madinan passages are concerned, the Qur'ân's attitude in its reference to Ibrâhîm as a *ḥanîf* is one of positive onslaught on and denunciation of the polytheistic beliefs and practices of the "People of the Book". (d) Nor does the Qur'ân at any place make a claim to an older and purer monotheism, as the orientalists suggest. No priority or superiority is claimed for the teachings of any of the Prophets. On the contrary, the equality and the same monotheism of all the Prophets including Ya'qûb, Mûsâ and 'Îsâ and the continuity of the teachings of all of them are emphasized all through. No distinction is made in respect of any of them. (e) Last but not least, it was also at Makka that clear departures were made from all the basic beliefs and practices of the Jews and the Christians. Therefore nothing could be farther from the truth than to say that Muḥammad (ﷺ) had recourse to the Abrahamic tradition and *al-ḥanîfiyyah* in order to break away from Juddaism and Christianity when, after his migration to Madina, he fell out with the Jews.

The last point deserves a little more careful attention. It is an established and well known pattern of historical development that whenever an individual or a group of individuals come up with a new scheme of reform or a new programme of action, the very first step they take is to explain the novelty and rationale of their scheme and how it differs from the existing pattern of ideas and practices. In fact the success of their scheme depends on this very initial step, particularly if the scheme relates to ideas and beliefs. If, therefore, the role Muḥammad (ﷺ) played had anything to do with his thought and preparation and with the usual process of historical development, it was only in the fitness of things that he should have explained at

the outset the distinctiveness of his ideas and their differences with the existing faiths and practices. Indeed the support he got and the opposition he met with prior to his migration to Madina can be explained only in terms of the novelty and distinctiveness of his mission. Contrary to this well-known historical process, contrary to reason and common sense and, above all, contrary to the evidence of the Qur'ân and the histories, the orienatlists would have us believe that Muḥammad (ﷺ) simply picked up bits of Judaism and Christianity, and that also from secondary sources, and then continued to preach them in the name of a new religion[1] till, after more than ten years of such preaching he came to Madina and fell out with the Jews, when he broke away from both Judaism and Christianity by tracing his doctrines to the teachings of a more ancient Prophet. It is surprising that such an absurd suggestion could at all have been seriously made. The Qur'ân, and therefore the Prophet, denounced the Trinity, the doctrine of the sonship of God, the divinity of 'Îsâ and such other beliefs of the People of the Book right from the beginning. At Madina the same onslaught on the same beliefs and notions was continued when reference was made to Ibrâhîm as a *ḥanîf* in reply to their claim of identity with him. The objection that the beliefs and practices alluded to constituted either conspicuous or constructive polytheism antithetical to Abrahamic monotheism was not met then, nor has it since then been done satisfactorily. Instead, it has been calimed that Muḥammad (ﷺ) derived his ideas and information from Judaism and Christianity, that he only broke away from the two systems when he came to Madina after 13 years of preaching as a Prophet, that *al-ḥanîfiyyah* and *ḥanîfs* spoken of by the Qur'ân and the histories are the product of his unresting mind or of the imagination of the historians, etc. Clearly these theories are in the nature of counter-blasts and apologies against the Qur'ânic onslaught on the beliefs and practices of the People of the Book.

1. The suggestion that the technical use of *Islâm* and *Muslim* was not made till after the migration to Madina, noticed earlier in this chapter, appears to be a manoeuvre to avoid this inherent absurdity of the theory.

SECTION IV
RECEIPT OF *WAḤY* AND INCEPTION OF THE MISSION

CHAPTER XVI

DIVINE COMMUNICATION (*WAḤY*) AND INCEPTION OF THE MISSION

I. THE RECEIPT OF DIVINE COMMUNICATION

There is no doubt that most of those who are described as *ḥanîfs* were the Prophet's contemporaries and that he had come in contact with some of them, at least those who were inhabitants of Makka and were from among his relatives and acquaintances such as Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl, Waraqah ibn Nawfal and 'Ubayd Allah ibn Jaḥsh. The sources do not furnish any detail, however, about such contacts, nor do they give any clear indication of the mutual influence, if any, of one upon the other. But whatever the nature of such contact it is clear that the Prophet did not imitate any one of them in undertaking travels to distant lands like Syria in search of the true religion. On the contrary, all that is known about his disposition and activities for sometime prior to his call to prophethood is that he gradually began to love seclusion and engaged himself in solitary worship, contemplation and devotion at a cave on top of the mount Ḥirâ', some three miles east north-east of the Ka'ba (at present within the city limits). It was in the course of such solitary stay at the cave that he received one day God's communication (*waḥy*) through the angel Jibrîl. The most reliable account of this momentous event is that given by his wife, 'Â'ishah (r.a.), which is preserved in the collection of authentic (*ṣaḥîḥ*) reports made by Bukhârî. The report is transmitted by her nephew (sister's son) 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr (d.94 H.), from him by Ibn Shihâb al-Zuhrî (d.124 H.), from him by 'Uqayl (d.144 H.), from him by Al-Layth (d.175 H.), from him by Yaḥyâ ibn Bukayr (d.231 H.) and from the last-mentioned by Bukhârî (d.256 H.). The report runs as follows:

"She ['Â'ishah (r.a.)] said: Divine communication to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, started with good dreams (الرؤيا الصالحة)[1] in sleep. Thence he did not see any dream but that it came like the break of dawn. Thereafter (ثم) seclusion became dear to him. He used to go into seclusion (كان يخلو) at the cave of Ḥirâ' wherein he engaged himself in *al-taḥannuth* - that is prayer and submissiveness – تعبد [2] – consecutively for a number of nights before returning to his family and taking provisions for that (sort of stay there). Then he would come back

1. In another form of the report, "true dreams" (الرؤيا الصادقة).
2. The explanatory clause is that of Al-Zuhrî.

to Khadîjah and take provisions for similar stay till the truth came to him while he was in the cave of Ḥirâ'. The angel came to him and said: 'Read'. He replied: 'I am not one who reads' (ما أنا بقارئ). He [the Prophet] said: 'At this he [the angel] seized me and so pressed me that it became hard on me to bear it (حتى بلغ مني الجهد). Then he released me and said: 'Read'. I said: 'I am not one who reads'. Thereupon he seized me and pressed me for a second time till it became hard on me. Then he released me and said: 'Read'. I replied: 'I am not one who reads'. Thereupon he seized me and pressed me for the third time; then he released me and said: 'Read in the name of your Lord Who created; created man from *'alaq* (علق). Read; and your Lord is the Most Gracious.'[1] Then the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, returned with that (فرجع بها), his heart throbbing (with panic and bewilderment يرجف فؤاده). He went to Khadîjah bint Khuwaylid, may Allah be pleased with her, and said : 'Cover me, cover me.' So they covered him (and he remained so) till his panic was over. Then he spoke to Khadîjah and related to her the matter adding: 'I am apprehensive about myself (i.e. of some mishap occurring to me).'At this Khadîjah said: 'Never, by Allah, never will He disgrace you. You take care of your relatives, you bear the burdens of the weak, you extend pecuniary help to the poor and the destitute (وتكسب المعدوم), you entertain guests and help the victims of the vicissitudes of time.[2] Then she took him out with her and went to Waraqah ibn Nawfal ibn Asad ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzâ— son of Khadîjah's uncle. He was a person who had embraced Christianity in the *Jâhiliyyah* period and used to write Hebrew script and copy the *Injîl* in Hebrew as much as God willed him do so.[3] He was far advanced in age and had turned blind. Khadîjah said to him: O my cousin, listen to your brother's son.' So Waraqah said to him (the Prophet): 'O my nephew, tell me what you have to tell.' So the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, related to him what he had seen. Thereupon Waraqah said to him: 'This is the *Nâmûs* (i.e. the confidential angel Jibrîl) whom God had sent to Mûsâ. I wish I were young then! O, were it for me to remain alive when your people will drive you out!" At this the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, enquired: 'Will they drive me out? Waraqah said: 'Yes; no one had ever appeared with the like of what you have come with but had been the target of enmity. If your day finds me alive, I will assist you to the utmost of my capacity.' But it was not long before Waraqah died. And there was a pause in the coming of *waḥy*."[4]

1. These are the first three *'âyahs* of *sûrat al-'Alaq* (no. 96). In another form of the report the passage runs for two more *'âyahs*, i.e., up to "Taught man what he knew not."

2. In another form of this report there are a few additions to this description.

3. In another form of the report, "he used to write the *Injîl* in Arabic."

4. *Bukhârî*, no. 3. This report, or parts of it, sometimes with slight variations in words, also appear in other places of the work in connection with different topics. See for instance nos. 3392, 4953, 4955, 4956, 4957 and 6982.

It should be noted that this report consists not only of the statements of 'Â'ishah (r.a.) and Waraqah but the very words in which the Prophet described his experience at the cave, particularly his having been seized and pressed thrice by the angel. This is very significant; for the Prophet not only saw the entity that visited him, but very much felt him physically. And it is stated in the report that the entity was an angel. Apart from this, the report brings out a number of facts very clearly. In the first place, it says that there was a sort of twilight period preceding the receipt of the communication on the mount Ḥirâ'. During this initial period the Prophet used to see significant dreams *in sleep* which were as vivid and life-like as the morning day-light. Some reports say that this initial period lasted for about six months.[1] Some other reports have it also that during this period the Prophet, while walking in the streets of Makka, sometimes heard a voice calling him from above and when he looked up he noticed some figure appearing high up in the heaven or at the horizon and introducing himself as Jibrîl.[2]

Second, this initial period was followed by a period of solitary prayer and contemplation at the cave of Ḥirâ'. The expression *al-taḥannuth* (التحنث) used in this connection have been variously explained by the classical writers as well as by modern writers.[3] Whatever the exact meaning of the term, it clearly is a description, so far as this particular report is concerned, of the state in which the Prophet had placed himself pursuant to his love for seclusion which developed in him after the initial period of "good dreams". The further fact noted in the report, namely, his returning to his family from time to time to take provisions for his stay in the mountain cave, is only illustrative of this solitary stay and seclusion consecutively for several days and nights.

Third, it was in such solitary state in the cave that the angel appeared and delivered to him the text from God. The incident took place in the Prophet's wakefulness and full consciousness. This is evident not only from the vivid account of his experiences with the angel (that is his having been thrice seized and pressed) but also from the fact that this stage is distinguished in the report from the previous one of dreams *in sleep*.

Fourth, the text which he received and with which he came down from

1. See *Fatḥ al-Bârî*, I., 36.

2. Al-Bayhaqî, *Dalâ'il*, II., 143. See also below.

3. See for instance, M.J. Kister, "*Al-Taḥannuth*. An enquiry into the meaning of a term", *B.S.O.A.S.*, XXXI (1968), 233-236.

the mountain was not something which dawned on him as a result of his meditation and contemplation. It was a distinct text dictated to him from an external source. This fact is well worth emphasizing; for, whereas in the case of some other religious leaders like Gautama Buddha the "enlightenment" and spiritual state attained was a climax of such meditation and contemplation, in the case of the Prophet it is clearly stated that what he received was not at all a result of his mental, spiritual or intellectual exercises, but a text delivered to him by another entity. The text itself bears an eloquent testimony to this effect; for it speaks in no way of an attainment of elightenment. On the contrary it reminds man of his origin and exhorts the Prophet to read in the name of his Lord. Indeed, this very exhortation to read signifies that what he was being given was a text which he was required by God to read out. This internal evidence of the text is a decisive proof that it did not emanate from within the Prophet himself and this is further illustrated by the plain purport of the text. It clearly emphasizes the importance of reading, and therefore, of knowledge; and if communication of that simple message was the Prophet's objective, he could as well have done that without having recourse to solitude and with only a little thinking on his part.

Fifth, the Prophet's first reaction to the event was clearly that of a person who was not prepared for that type of incident and had never expected or anticipated it. That is why his immediate reaction was one of panic and bewilderment and apprehension about himself. This nature of his reaction is a further illustration of the fact that what he had received was from an external source and not a phenomenon of his own psychology. It is also a proof, as indicated earlier,[1] of the absence of any design or ambition on his part to emerge as a Prophet by some device or other. This conclusion is emphasized also by Khadîjah's reaction and further by both Khadîjah's and the Prophet's consulting Waraqah on the matter and the latter's reaction to the incident.

Last but not least, the account illustrates two other facts. One is the absence of any skill on the Prophet's part to read; for his spontaneous reply to the angel's asking him to read was: "I am not one who reads."[2] The other fact is that the text of the communication made to the Prophet presupposes his prior knowledge of and belief in the One Only God; for he was simply asked to read "in the name of your Lord" without introducing or explaining

1. *Supra*, pp. 233-240.
2. See also *supra*, pp. 179-181 & 241-250.

to him the nature and existence of his Lord. It is taken for granted that he knew Who his Lord was.

The report ends with the statement that there was a pause in the coming of *waḥy* after the first instalment delivered at Ḥirâ'. This was only natural; for the first incident must have stirred the Prophet to his very depth and clearly he needed a breathing time to recover from the first shock. At the same time he must have naturally become eager to have a second glimpse of the entity who had communicated the text at Ḥirâ' and thus be reassured of the reality of what he had experienced. As is natural in such a situation, when a person comes across some unusual sight or has an unexpected experience at any particular spot, he feels tempted to visit it again in the expectation that he might have a similar experience there again. It is therefore not at all surprising that the sources speak of his having somtimes frequented the mount Ḥirâ' and the neighbouring hills, undoubtedly in the hope of getting a second glimpse of the angel. And indeed he did have a second glimpse of the angel not long after the first encounter at Ḥirâ'. This second experience on his part is thus reported by Al-Zuhrî as follows:

He says: "'Abû Salamah ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmân has informed me that Jâbir ibn 'Abd Allah al-Anṣârî related, speaking about the pause in the coming of *waḥy*, that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, said: 'While I was walking I heard a voice in the sky. I raised my eyes and lo! there was the angel who had come to me at Ḥirâ' sitting on a chair between the sky and the earth. I was frightened at that and returned (to my family) and said to them: 'Cover me'. Then Allah sent down on me: 'O wrapped up in the mantle, rise and warn' up to 'and the abomination, shun it.'[1] After that *waḥy* continued coming regularly and uninterruptedly."[2]

In one of the places where Bukhârî repeats the report about the coming of the first *waḥy* at mount Ḥirâ', i.e., in his chapter on "Interpretation of dreams" (*Ta'bîr*), he has an addition to the report of 'Â'ishah (r.a.) noticed above. At this place he also gives two chains of narrators subsequent to Al-Zuhrî, namely, (a) Yaḥyâ ibn Bukayr ← Al-Layth ← 'Uqayl ← Al-Zuhrî and (b) 'Abd Allah ibn Muḥammad ← 'Abd al-Razzâq ← Ma'mar ← Al-Zuhrî. The addition runs as follows:

"And then there was a pause in the coming of *waḥy* for such a period that the Prophet, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, as we have come to know

1. *Sûrah* 74, *'âyahs* 1-5.
2. *Bukhârî*, no. 4. The report is repeated in the chapter on *Tafsîr* (no. 4954).

(فيما بلغنا) became so sad that he went on a number of times (مرارا) to throw himself down from the hill-tops. Thus whenever he went up to the top of a hill to throw himself down, Jibrîl appeared before him and said: 'O Muḥammad, you are truly Allah's Messenger." At this the Prophet's mind would be set at rest and he would be reassured; but when again the pause prolonged he similarly went and as he reached the top of a hill Jibrîl appeared before him and spoke to him similarly."[1]

This story of extreme frustration on the Prophet's part on account of the pause in the coming of *waḥy* and, in consequence, of his alleged suicide attempts, is not at all worthy of credence. As Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalânî points out, the story is only an addition and surmise on Al-Zuhrî's part and no statement of the Prophet himself, nor of 'Â'ishah (r.a.), nor even of 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr.[2] This addition has been so mixed up with the text that it appears to be part of the original narration. That it is Al-Zuhrî's addition is very clear from his qualifying clause, "as we have come to know", with which he introduces this section. Had it been the Prophet's or 'Â'ishah's (r.a.) statement, there would have been no need to add this expression, for the chain of narrators had already been given at the beginning of the narration.

The second technical defect in the story has been pointed out by Muḥammad Nâṣir al-Dîn al-Albânî. He states that it is a *shâdh* (شاذ strange or odd) report in that it has come down only once through a chain of narrators subsequent to Al-Zuhrî among whom there is Ma'mar, and that in all other forms in which the matter is reported, even though Ma'mar is mentioned as one of the narrators, this addition does not occur. Nor is this addition found anywhere else with an uninterrupted chain of narrators worthy to be cited as evidence.[3]

Apart from these technical considerations, the Prophet's character and personality do not admit of such a conduct on his part. The story is all the more unworthy of credence because it speaks not of one such alleged suicide attempt but of several such attempts; as if the assurance given by Jibrîl for the second time (i.e. after the first appearance at the cave of Ḥirâ') would not have satisfied the Prophet! The story might have originated, as one scholar points out, in someone's seeing the Prophet frequenting the hills, as he natu-

1. *Bukhârî*, no. 6982.

2. *Fatḥ al-Bârî*, XII, 376. Ibn Ḥajar's words are: (من بلاغات الزهري وليس موصولا)

3. Muḥammad Nâṣir al-Dîn al-Albânî, *Difâ' 'an al-Ḥadîth al-Nabawiyyah wa al-Sîrah*, Damascus (1388 H.), 40-42.

rally did during the pause in the coming of *waḥy*, and then supposing on the basis of that sight that the Prophet was about to throw himself down from the top of the hill![1] And once such a surmise was circulated it easily found its place in subsequent reports with further mixing up of the facts and circumstances.[2]

The surmise of the Prophet's suicide attempts is thus totally groundless; but it is a fact that he had a second glimpse of the angel shortly after his receipt of *waḥy* at mount Ḥirâ'. This fact is stated clearly in the Qur'ân as follows:

(a) ﴿ ولقد رءاه بالأفق المبين ﴾ (٨١ :٢٣)

"And he had indeed seen him (Jibrîl) in the clear horizon."(81: 23)[3]

(b) ﴿ علَّمَه شديد القوىٰ * ذو مِرَّةٍ فاستوىٰ * وهو بالأفق الأعلَىٰ * ثم دنا فتدلىٰ * فكان قاب قوسين أو أدنىٰ ... ﴾ (٥٣ : ٥-٩)

"He was taught by the one mighty in power, endued with wisdom; he appeared in a stately form, while he was in the highest part of the horizon. Then he approached and came closer; and was at a distance of but two bowlengths or even nearer..." (53:5-9)[4]

Before proceeding further with the story it would be worthwhile to take into account some other reports concerning the receipt of the first divine communication by the Prophet, especialy those given by Ibn Isḥâq, Ibn Sa'd (i.e. of Al-Wâqidî) and Al-Ṭabarî.

II. THE REPORTS GIVEN BY IBN ISḤÂQ

Speaking on the subject Ibn Isḥâq first reproduces part of 'Â'ishah's (r.a.) report as given in *Bukhârî* and as quoted above, saying that at first the Prophet used to see good dreams in sleep which appeared like morning daylight; then seclusion became dear to him so that nothing was dearer to him than to be alone.[5] At this point Ibn Isḥâq leaves the report and inserts another report which he says his informants received from "men of learning". It mentions some unusual incidents like the trees' and stones' saluting the Prophet-

1. Muḥammad Muḥammad 'Abû Shahbah, *Al-Sîrat al-Nabawiyyah Fî Ḍaw' al-Qur'ân wa al-Sunnah*, I, Damascus, 1409 / 1988, p. 266.

2. See *Musnad*, II, 232-233; 'Abû Nu'a'ym, *Dalâ'il*, 68-69; Al-Bayḥaqî, *Dalâ'il*, I., 393-395.

3. See Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr*, VIII, 361-362.

4. See *ibid*, VII, 419-422.

5. Ibn Hishâm, I, 234.

to-be, etc.[1] Then Ibn Isḥâq resumes the story of the coming of *waḥy* on the basis of another report which he got from Wahb-ibn Kaysân (d. 127 H.) who, it is said, heard 'Abd Allah ibn al-Zubayr asking 'Ubayd ibn 'Umayr ibn Qatâdah al-Lythî[2] (d. 68. H.) on the subject whereupon he ('Ubayd) stated as follows:

"The Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, used to retire (يجاور) at Ḥirâ' every year for a month, as was the wont of the Quraysh to engage themselves in *taḥannuth* for such a period during the Days of *Jâhiliyyah*...[3] So the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, used to retire there for that month every year, feeding the poor who repaired to him. When the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, finished that month-long retirement, the first thing he did before going home, was to go to the Ka'ba and circumambulate it seven times, or as many times as Allah wished him to do. Then he would return to his home. This practice he continued to follow till the month in which Allah willed to honour him, of the year in which He called him to prophethood, and that was the month of Ramaḍân. So the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, went out to Ḥirâ', as he used to do, and his family was with him, till the night arrived in which Allah honoured him with His message and blessed His servants (mankind) thereby. There came to him Jibrîl, may Allah's peace be on him, by Allah's command. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, said: Jibrîl came to me, while I was asleep, with a silken casket in which there was a writing, and said to me: 'Read.' (The Prophet said) I replied: 'I do not read'. (The Prophet said) Thereupon he pressed me so hard that I thought I would die. Then he released me and said: 'Read'. (The Prophet said) I replied: 'I do no read.' (The Prophet said) Thereupon he pressed me so hard that I thought I would die. Then he released me and said: Read'. (The Prophet said) I said: 'What shall I read?' (The Prophet said) Thereupon he pressed me so hard that I thought I would die. Then he released me and said: 'Read'. (The Prophet said) I said: 'What shall I read?' I did not say so except to avoid his doing the same to me as he had done. Then he said: 'Read in the name of thy Lord Who created; created man from *'alaq*. Read, and your Lord is the Most Gracious; Who taught by means of the pen; taught man what he knew not.' The Prophet said: 'So I read it.' Then it ended and he left me and I woke up from my sleep; and it was as if a writ was written on my heart. (The Prophet said) Thereafter I came out (of the cave) till I was in the mid-

1. *Ibid*, 234-235.

2. He was a *tâbi'î*. See *Tahdhîb al-Tahdhîb*, VII, 71 (no. 148); *Taqrîb al-Tahdhîb*, I, 544, no. 1561.

3. Ibn Isḥâq interposes here a couplet of 'Abû Ṭâlib's concerning *al-taḥannuth* which is followed by Ibn Hishâm's explanation of the word. *Ibid.*, 235-236.

dle of the hill when I heard a voice from the sky saying: 'O Muḥammad, you are the Messenger of Allah, and I am Jibrîl. (The Prophet said) I raised my head looking towards the sky and lo! there was Jibrîl clearly in the shape of a man with his two feet spread in the horizon saying: 'O Muḥammad, you are Allah's Messenger, and I am Jibrîl. (The Prophet said) Thereupon I stood looking at him, and I moved neither forward nor backward. I started turning my face from him in the horizon, but in whatever direction of the horizon I looked I saw him in the same position. I remained standing without moving forward or backward till Khadîjah sent her men in search of me. They reached Upper Makka and returned to her while I was still standing in that place of mine. Then he (Jibrîl) left me."

"I left the place, returning to my family till I came to Khadîjah and sat touching her thigh and leaning towards her. She said: 'O 'Abû al-Qâsim, where had you been? By Allah I sent my people in search of you till they reached Upper Makka and then returned to me. Then I narrated to her what I had seen. Thereupon she said: 'Rest assured, O son of my uncle. By Him in Whose hand is Khadîjah's life, I hope you will become the Prophet of these people."

"Then she stood up, put her dress on, and went out to Waraqah ibn Nawfal ibn Asad ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzâ ibn Quṣayy. He was her uncle's son, and had become a Christian, read the Book (Gospels) and had heard from the scholars of the *Torah* and the *Injîl*. She informed him of what the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, had related to her regarding what he had seen and heard. Thereupon Waraqah ibn Nawfal said: 'Holy, Holy. By Him in Whose hands is the life of Waraqah, if you have spoken the truth, O Khadîjah, then indeed the Great Nâmûs (Jibrîl) who came to Mûsâ, has come to him (the Prophet); verily he is the Prophet of these people. So tell him to rest assured." Then Khadîjah returned to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, and told him what Waraqah ibn Nawfal had said. Then when the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, ended his retired state (جواره) and left the place, he did what he used to do, beginning with the Ka'ba and circumambulating it. There Waraqah ibn Nawfal, who was also circumambulating it, met him (the Prophet) and said: 'O my brother's son, tell me what you have seen and heard.' So the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, informed him of everything. Thereupon Waraqah said to him: 'By Him in Whose hands is my life, you are indeed the Prophet of these people, and the Great Nâmûs, who came to Mûsâ, has come to you. You will not be believed, you will be put to trouble and you will be driven out and fought with. If I live till that day I will surely help the cause of Allah as He knows.' Then Waraqah leaned his head towards him (the Prophet) and kissed the middle of his head. Then the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, went to his house."[1]

1. Ibn Hishâm, I., 234-237.

It is obvious that this report differs in many respects from that of 'Â'ishah (r.a.) given in *Bukhârî* and noted earlier. The differences consist in omissions of, additions to and modification of the facts mentioned by the latter. As regards omissions, this report given by Ibn Isḥâq does not mention any initial period of good or true dreams preceding the Prophet's engaging himself in *taḥannuth* at the cave of Ḥirâ'. Secondly, there is also no indication of panic or bewilderment on the Prophet's part in consequence of his encounters and experiences with Jibrîl. Lastly, there is no mention in this report of any pause in the coming of *waḥy* after the receipt of the first instalment at the cave of Ḥirâ'.

As regards additions, the first noticeable thing is that this report says that the Prophet's sojourn in the cave of Ḥirâ' was in accordance with the tradition of Quraysh's doing similar *taḥannuth* every year during the month of Ramaḍân. It further says that the Prophet also did so every year. Secondly, it says that while the Prophet was coming down from the cave and was still in the middle of the hill the angel Jibrîl appeared again in the sky, called the Prophet by his name and assured him that he was indeed Allah's Messenger. Thirdly, it says that on his return from the hill the first thing the Prophet did was going to the Ka'ba and circumambulating it. Lastly, it says that in addition to Khadijah's meeting Waraqah, the latter met the Prophet at the Ka'ba compound and expressed similar views about him as were earlier expressed to Khadîjah (r.a.).

More remarkable, however, are the modifications that appear in this report in the facts stated in 'Â'ishah's (r.a.) report. In the first place, it is stated that the Prophet took his family with him when he went to Ḥirâ' for *taḥannuth*. Secondly and more importantly, it is said that the angel Jibrîl came and delivered the text to the Prophet while he was asleep in the cave of Ḥirâ'. It is further stated that the angel pressed him four times, instead of the three in the other report; and that twice the Prophet said that he did not know reading and twice he asked what he should read. Thirdly, this report makes Khadîjah (r.a.) go alone to Waraqah to seek his opinion about her husband, leaving him behind.

It should be noted that the ultimate authority of this report is 'Ubayd ibn 'Umayr ibn Qatâdah who is a *tâbi'î* and who does not mention the source of his information. The report is thus technically *mursal*, that is, going back only to the second generation after the Prophet. It is a recognized principle of

interpretation that if a *mursal* report differs from one that goes back with reliable and uninterrupted *isnâd* to the Prophet (*mawṣûl, marfû'*), the latter prevails over the former. Hence that part of 'Ubayd ibn 'Umayr's report produced by Ibn Isḥâq which is at variance with the report given in *Bukhârî* must yield place to the latter. In any case the statement that the Prophet received the revelation at the cave of Ḥirâ' while he was asleep, that is in a state of dreaming, is unacceptable in view of the clear statement in 'Â'ishah's (r.a.) report that it happened in the Prophet's wakefulness and full consciousness. Some commentators have of course attempted to reconcile the two statements by saying that the text of the revelation was first received in dream and then again in wakefulness. This explanation, though somewhat in line with the fact of a period of good dreams preceding the coming of revelation at Ḥirâ', ignores the fact that 'Ubayd ibn 'Umayr makes this dream happen at the cave of Ḥirâ' itself.

In fact the report under consideration appears to have mixed up the fact of the initial period of good dreams with the second stage of solitary prayer and contemplation (*taḥannuth*) and the receipt of the first text of revelation at Ḥirâ' in the state of the Prophet's wakefulness and full consciousness. This mixing up is all the more obvious from another aspect of the report which makes the Prophet see Jibrîl in the sky immediately after having come out of the cave after his alleged dream and while still in the middle of the mountain, and not after a pause in the coming of *waḥy* as narrated in some other reports.[1] Also, it does not appear to be correct that the Quraysh used to engage themselves in *taḥannuth* each year for the month of Ramaḍân and that the Prophet betook himself to the cave of Ḥirâ' in imitation of that custom. Again, the statement that he took his family there is inconsistent with the concept of seclusion and solitary prayer which was the sole objective of *taḥannuth*. It is also inconsistent with the other statement that Khadîjah (r.a.) sent her men in search of the Prophet as he stood in the middle of the mountain gazing at Jibrîl in the sky. The account gives the impression that while the Prophet was staying in the cave, his family was staying at another spot at the mountain, a situation which is warranted neither by the extent and shape of the mountain nor by the purpose, if at all, of dragging them out to the bleak mountains. Even then it is quite unlikely that Khadîjah, if she had at all gone to the mountain, would have been unaware of the Prophet's whereabouts. Clearly there is here a mixing up of an incident which took place on

1. See below, text.

another occasion, most probably when the Prophet used to go to the mountain during the *pause* in the coming of *waḥy.*

Despite these anomalies and confusions in the report, it corroborates in general the solid core of facts given in 'Â'ishah's (r.a.) report, namely, (a) that the Prophet received the first text of the revelation at Ḥirâ' from the angel Jibrîl; (b) that at a subsequent stage the Prophet saw the angel appearing in the sky, introducing himself as Jibrîl and assuring Muḥammad (ﷺ) that he was indeed God's Messenger; and (c) that Waraqah ibn Nawfal, when he heard the account of the incident at Ḥirâ', expressed his view that it was the very angel (Nâmûs) who used to come to Mûsâ with God's revelation and that Muḥammad (ﷺ) had received such a commission from God.

III. THE REPORTS GIVEN BY AL-WÂQIDÎ

The next account in point of time is that of Al-Wâqidî (Muḥammad ibn 'Umar, 120-207 H.) coming through his scribe Muḥammad ibn Sa'd (168-230 H.).

(1) Al-Wâqidî first quotes the initial part of 'Â'ishah's (r.a.) report as given in *Bukhârî* but through a different *isnâd*, namely, through Ma'mar ibn Râshid and Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allah. In effect, however, this part of the report is the same as that in *Bukhârî*, saying that the Prophet first used to see good (or true) dreams for sometime, after which seclusion became dear to him so that nothing was dearer to him than that, that he next retired to the cave of Ḥirâ' for engaging himself in *taḥannuth* consecutively for several days and coming back to his family from time to time to take provisions for that sort of stay on the mountain, till "the truth" came to him.[1]

(2) At this point Al-Wâqidî introduces another report which he received through Ibrâhîm ibn Ismâ'îl, from Dâ'ûd ibn al-Ḥusayn, from 'Ikrima, from Ibn 'Abbâs. It is said that Ibn 'Abbâs stated that when the Prophet was in that state (i.e., presumably, after the receipt of 'the truth' الحق) at Ajyad he saw an angel sitting cross-legged in the sky at the horizon, calling him (the Prophet) by name and introducing himself as Jibrîl. At this sight the Prophet was terrified and started looking in other directions of the sky, but to whatever direction he turned his eyes he saw the angel. Hence the Prophet hurried back home, went to Khadîjah (r.a.) and expressed his fear that he might turn a soothsayer though he detested it the most. She comforted him by mentioning the qualities of his head and heart. Then she went to Waraqah and

1. Ibn Sa'd, I, 194.

related to him the story. The latter said that it was the Great Nâmûs who had appeared to her husband and that it indicated the beginning of his prophethood, adding that he should not therefore think anything but good for himself.[1]

(3) Al-Wâqidî next produces two other reports, one after another, received through different chains of narrators and both saying that the Prophet sometimes saw light and heard sounds and expressed his fears to his wife saying that he would probably turn a soothsayer. Khadîjah (r.a.) would comfort him by mentioning his noble qualities. One of these reports says that the Prophet also expressed his fears that he might even go mad and that at this Khadîjah (r.a.) went to Waraqah who opined that it was the Nâmûs who had appeared to her husband, that he would be a Prophet and that Waraqah would help him if he lived till that time.[2]

(4) Next Al-Wâqidî reproduces three different reports form three different sources. Two of these reports say that the first thing which was revealed to the Prophet was the five initial *'âyahs* of *sûrat al-'Alaq*. Al-Wâqidî notes that this happened on "the day of Ḥirâ'".[3] The third report was received from Dâ'ûd ibn al-Ḥusayn who had it from Ghaṭfân ibn Ṭarîf who, in his turn, had it from Ibn 'Abbâs. It says that after the revelation which came at Ḥirâ' the Prophet did not see Jibrîl for "several days". Hence he became sad and started frequenting the Thabîr and Ḥirâ' mountains in order to throw himself from them. Once while he was thus going to one of those mountains he heard a voice from the sky and as he turned his eyes upwards he saw Jibrîl sitting crosslegged on a chair and calling him and saying "O Muḥammad, you are truly Allah's Messenger, and I am Jibrîl." The Prophet then left the place, his mind set at rest. Thereafter *waḥy* came regularly and without interruption.[4]

Now, the authorities' rating of Al-Wâqidî's credibility is very low; but apart from that question, the points illustrated by the reports produced by him may be tabulated as follows. In the first place, it is stated that there was an initial period of "true" dreams which was followed by the Prophet's love for solitary retirement. Second, it is stated that the Prophet used to retire at the cave of Ḥirâ' where he remained consecutively for several days before

1. *Ibid*, 194-195.
2. *Ibid.*, 195.
3. *Ibid.*, 196.
4. *Ibid.*

returning to his family to take provisions for the purpose. There is no mention in these reports that such *taḥannuth* on the Prophet's part was in imitation of the custom of the Quraysh; nor is there any suggestion that the Prophet's family went with him to the hills. Third, it is clearly stated that it was at the cave of Ḥirâ' that the first revelation was received and that it consisted of the first five *'âyahs* of *sûrat al-'Alaq*. The details of how the angel appeared and delivered the text are not mentioned. At the same time there is no indication whatsoever that the incident took place while the Prophet was asleep (i.e. in dream). Fourth, as regards the seeing of the angel Jibrîl in the horizon one of Al-Wâqidî's reports says that this happened at Ajyad, while another of his reports says that this happened when the Prophet frequented the Thabîr and Ḥirâ' mountains in consequence of the angel's not appearing to him for "several days" after the first revelation. This information corroborates the fact of a pause in the coming of *waḥy*. Fifth, as regards the alleged intention on the Prophet's part to throw himself from the mountain tops, it appears unmistakably that it is only a guess on the narrator's part, in this instance on the part of either Ibn 'Abbâs or some other narrator subsequent to him. Sixth, as regards the consultation with Waraqah one of Al-Wâqidî's reports makes the event happen after the seeing of the angel reportedly at Ajyad; while the other report makes it happen after the Prophet had sometimes seen light and heard sounds, etc. Excepting these two last mentioned points (fifth and sixth), thus, the facts presented by Al-Wâqidî are in accord with those given in 'Â'ishah's (r.a.) report and recorded in *Bukhârî*.

IV. Al-ṬABARÎ'S ACCOUNT

Writing more than a hundred years after Al-Wâqidî, Al-Ṭabarî (224-310 H.) reproduces Ibn Isḥâq's report, as mentioned above, with minor alterations in wording and slight omissions and additions in the text, but otherwise mentioning him by name and keeping as close to his text as possible.[1] Before reproducing his version of Ibn Isḥâq's report, however, Al-Ṭabarî puts in another report of the event which he says he received from Aḥmad ibn 'Uthmân ('Abû Jawrâ,) who had it from Wahb ibn Jarîr, who, from his father (i.e. Jarîr), the latter from Al-Nu'mân ibn Râshid, he from Al-Zuhrî, from 'Urwah, from 'Â'ishah (r.a.). This report is distinguished from that given in Ibn Isḥâq by the fact that whereas the latter's report goes back, as noted above, only to 'Ubayd ibn 'Umayr and is as such *mursal*, Al-Ṭabarî's report

1. Al-Ṭabarî, *Târikh*, II, 300-302 (I / 1149-1153).

goes back to 'Â'ishah (r.a.) through Al-Zuhrî and 'Urwah. The salient features of this report are as follows:

(a) In the first part of the report the facts are exactly the same as they are related in the report in *Bukhârî*, namely, the initial period of "true" or "good" dreams, followed by the Prophet's love for seclusion, his solitary prayer and stay at the cave of Ḥirâ' consecutively for a number of days, his returning to his family from time to time to take provisions for a similar stay, till the "truth" came to him. From this point the report differs from that in *Bukhârî* and runs as follows:

The Prophet is said to have related:

(b) "So he [the angel] came to me and said: 'O Muḥammad, you are the Messenger of Allah.' The Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be on him, said: 'At this I fell on my knees, though I was standing. Then I returned (to my family), my heart throbbing. Then I went to Khadîjah and said to her: 'Cover me, cover me.' (I remained so) till my panic went away. Then he [the angel] came to me and said: 'O Muḥammad, You are Allah's Messenger.' The Prophet said: 'At this I thought of throwing myself from the top of a mountain, and when I intended doing so he appeared before me and said: 'O Muḥammad, I am Jibrîl, and you are Allah's Messenger.' Then he said: "Read in the name of your Lord Who created.' So I read. Then I came to Khadîjah and said: 'I am afraid about my life. She said..."

(c) From this point the account is again the same as in *Bukhârî*, i.e., Khadîjah's words of consolation to the Prophet, their going to Waraqah, the latter's opinion that the angel Jibrîl (Nâmûs) had come with God's revelation, that the Prophet's people would turn against him, etc., ending with Waraqah's remarks that if he lived till that day he would render all possible help to the Prophet.

This report, though it traces its origin to 'Â'ishah (r.a.) through Al-Zuhrî and 'Urwah, differs from that in *Bukhârî* in the following essential respects:

(1) It says that the first thing the angel told the Prophet in the cave was that he was Allah's Messenger.

(2) That after the Prophet had come home from the cave the angel appeared again and told him that he was Allah's Messenger.

(3) That after this second appearance of the angel and also after the Prophet had been told for the second time that he was Allah's Messenger, he contemplated throwing himself from a hill-top.

(4) That when he was about to so throw himself from a hill-top the angel

appeared for the third time, introduced himself as Jibrîl, assured the Prophet that he was Allah's Messenger and delivered to him the first *'âyah* of *sûrat al-'Alaq*.

(5) There is no mention of the Prophet's first expressing his inability to read.

(6) There is also no mention about the pause in the coming of *waḥy*.

Now, it is obvious that neither 'Â'ishah (r.a.) nor, for that matter, Al-Zuhrî, could have given two essentially different accounts of the same event. If the facts stated here were true but were somehow omitted or skipped over by them the narrators subsequent to them should have mentioned the sources of their information. But nothing of the sort is indicated here or elsewhere. Even with regard to the alleged suicide attempt which finds mention in *Bukhârî* as Al-Zuhrî's surmise, it is given here in a quite different form. Thus while Al-Zhurî would have it that the Prophet allegedly intended to throw himself from a hill-top because of the pause in the coming of *waḥy* and only desisted from doing so when the angel Jibrîl reappeared and assured him that he was Allah's Messenger; the present report, on the other hand, not only does not make any mention of the pause in the coming of *waḥy* but also would have us believe that the Prophet meditated suicide because the angel Jibrîl appeared for the second time and also assured the Prophet for the second time that he was Allah's Messenger. Apart from the utter unreasonableness of the statement, it is obvious that Al-Zuhrî himself could not have given such divergent and diametrically opposite accounts about the cause and sequence of the event.

It is thus clear that the narrators subsequent to Al-Zuhrî or at least some of them through whom the account reached Al-Ṭabarî mixed up not only Al-Zuhrî's own statement but also the original report with other matters. In fact authoritative opinions are not quite at one about some of these narrators. For instance Nu'mân ibn Râshid, who is stated to have received the report from Al-Zuhrî, is regarded by a number of competent authorities as "very weak", "confused", profuse in making mistakes and even baseless surmises. It is even stated that he made reprehensible and worthless reports and should therefore be avoided.[1] Similarly Jarîr (ibn Ḥâzîm ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Shujâ'

1. Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalânî, *Tahdhîb al-Tahdhîb*, X, Hyderabad, 1227 H., p. 152, no. 819. Part of the criticism uns as follows: قال علي بن المديني ذكره يحيى القطان فضعّفه جدا وقال عبد الله بن أحمد سألت أبي عنه فقال مضطرب الحديث ، وروى أحاديث مناكير وقال ابن معين ضعيف وقال مرة ليس بشيء وقال البخاري وأبو حاتم في حديثه وهم كثير . . .

al-Azdî), who is stated to have received the report from Al-Nu'mân ibn Râshid, is considered to be profuse in errors, mixing up his surmises with the reports he transmitted, changing the sequence of events and even making reprehensible reports.[1] Also his son Wahb, who received the report under reference from him, used to commit mistakes. He is even stated to have attributed his reports to persons from whom he had not received them. Thus he transmitted about four thousand reports "form Shu'ba", but those were really reports of 'Abd al-Raḥmân al-Raṣṣâsî.[2]

Obviously, reports coming through such narrators need to be taken with caution and cannot be, according to the accepted rules of interpretation, given precedence over those on the same subject emanating from narrators of unimpeachable veracity.

It is not necessary to follow the accounts found in works later than Al-Ṭabarî's; for they do not really add anything new or authentic to the story. On the whole the most authentic account of the coming of the first revelation to the Prophet is that given by 'Â'ishah (r.a.) and contained in *Bukhârî.* This report and the other reports noticed above, excluding the points on which they disagree, bring out the following facts:

(i) That on the eve of his call the Prophet experienced an initial period of "good" dreams which appeared to him like the morning day-light.

(ii) That after this he began to love seclusion and spent a period of time in solitary prayer and contemplation at the cave on top of Mount Ḥirâ'.

(iii) That it was at the cave of Ḥirâ' that the angel Jibrîl appeared to him and delivered to him the first text of the revelation.

(iv) That shortly after this first encounter at the cave of Ḥirâ' the Prophet saw Jabrîl again in the sky, addressing him by name, disclosing his own identity and confirming that he (the Prophet) was Allah's Messenger.

(v) That what the Prophet received was something extraneous to him. It was a distinct text received from an external source, and not the result of his own contemplation and thinking. The experinece at Ḥirâ' was also no psychological phenomenon for him.

(vi) That the immediate reaction of the Prophet to the receipt of Divine communication was that of a person who never expected such a deve-

1. *Ibid.*, II, 71-72, No. 111.
2. *Ibid.*, XI, 161-162, No. 273.

lopment, that initially he was not quite sure of his new status and that it was only after the reassurance given by the angel Jibrîl (under Divine direction) and after consultation with Waraqah ibn Nawfal that his (the Prophet's) mind was set at rest;

(vii) That therefore previous to his receipt of the Divine communication the Prophet did not plan and design to play the role of a Prophet; and

(viii) That there was a short pause in the coming of revelation after the receipt of the first text at Ḥirâ'. This was in the nature of a breathing time enabling the Prophet to recover from the first shock of the extraordinary experience.

V. DATE OF THE FIRST REVELATION

The authorities generally agree in saying that the Prophet had completed the fortieth year of his life when he received the first divine communication at Mount Ḥirâ'.[1] An indirect allusion to this fact might be found, as one scholar suggests,[2] in the Qur'ânic statement at 46: 15 which indicates the age of forty to be the time when a servant willed to be grateful to Allah for His favours. It is said that the Prophet was born in the month of Rabî' I. Calculating on that basis his foriteth year would be completed in that very month of the year. And if the initial period of "good" or "true" dreams commenced on the completion of his fortieth year and if the period of *taḥannuth* at the cave of Hirâ' is taken into account, it should be clear that the receipt of the first divine communication took place a few months after the completion of the fortieth year.[3] That fits in well with the Qur'ânic statement that the Qur'ân was sent down in the month of Ramaḍân (i.e. the sixth month after Rabî'1). The passage runs as follows:

﴿شهر رمضان الذِى أنزل فيه القرءان هدًى لِلناس وَبَيِّنَـٰتٍ من الهدىٰ والفرقان...﴾ (٢ : ١٨٥)

"The month of Ramaḍân is that in which the Qur'ân was sent down as guidance to mankind and as clear proofs of the guidance and the Criterion." (2: 185).

1. Ibn Hishâm, I. 233; Ibn Sa'd, I, 190, 194; Al-Ṭabarî, *Târîkh*, II, 290-292 (I / 1139-1141). Al-Ṭabarî of course gives three reports (in fact two, for two of the reports emanate from the same person, Sa'îd ibn Musayyib) saying that revelation came to the Prophet when he was forty-three years old (Al-Ṭabarî, *Târikh, op.cit.*, 292). These reports, however, are not quite correct and they appear to trace the event from the time of the Prophet's public preaching and conflict with the Quraysh.

2. Muḥammad 'Izzat Darwazah, *Sîrat al-Rasûl*, I, Beirut, n.d. (1400 H.?), pp. 129-130.

3. See *Fatḥ al-Bârî*, I, 36; Al-Bayḥaqî, *Dalâ'il*, II, 143.

Some scholars of course interpret the particle *fî* (في) in this passage in the sense of "about" and say that the meaning of the *'âyah* is that the Qur'ân has been revealed about Ramaḍân (and fasting during it).[1] It may be noted that while the particle in question is sometimes used in the sense of "about" or "concerning", this sense would be very remote and out of context here. For the *'âyah* speaks of the Qur'ân as guidance for mankind, etc., thereby showing that the whole burden of the statement is on the Qur'ân and not on the month of Ramaḍân as such. Also, such a construction would not be in consonance with the relative importance of such other subjects as *tawḥîd*, *ṣalât*, and *zakâh* dealt with the Qur'ân. In fact if any single subject should be identified about which the Qur'ân may be said to have been revealed, it should be *tawḥîd*; for the whole of the Qur'ân relates in some form or other to this subject. Also *ṣalât* and *zakâh* are more frequently and more emphatically enjoined in the Qur'ân. Yet, nowhere in it do we find any mention that it has been revealed about any of these subjects. It would thus be inconsistent with both the context of the *'âyah* as well as the over-all subject matter of the Qur'ân to interpret the *'âyah* in question as saying that the Qur'ân has been revealed about Ramaḍân.[2]

It is, however, not only the above mentioned passage but two other passages of the Qur'ân which specifically refer to its having been revealed in the month of Ramaḍân and also indicate the approximate part of the month. The two passages are as follows:

(١) ﴿حمٓ * والكتـب المبين * إنا أنزلنـه فى ليلة مبـركة... ﴾ (٤٤ : ١ - ٣)

"Ḥâ-Mîm. By the Book that makes things clear. We have indeed sent it down during a blessed night..." (44:1-3)

(٢) ﴿إنا أنزلنـه فِى ليلة القدر﴾ (٩٧ : ١)

"We have indeed sent it (the Qur'ân) down in the Night of Power." (97:1).

These two passages, especially the first, clearly refer to the revelation of the Qur'ân; for the *'âyah* immediately preceding it (i.e. 44:2) specifically speaks about "the Book". Also, the obvious implication of both the passages quoted above is the beginning of the Qur'ânic revelation; for it is well-known that the whole of the Qur'ân was revealed to the Prophet in instal-

1. See Al-Bayḍâwî, *Tafsîr*, I, 105. See for discussion Akram Khan, *op. cit*, pp. 311-313.

2. This remote meaning is adopted by those who think that revelation came to the Prophet immediately on completion of the fortieth year of his life, in Rabî' I (8th day) and not in the month of Ramaḍân. Such a view, however, is contrary to the clear text of the Qur'ân.

ments over a span of 23 years. It should also be noted that the terms Qur'ân and *Kitâb* have been used throughout in the Qur'ân to mean the whole as well as part of it.

It is thus clear that the first Qur'ânic revelation came to the Prophet during the month of Ramaḍân, more specifically in the "Night of Power" or the "Blessed Night".[1] There are a number of reports saying that this night is one of the nights during the last ten days of Ramaḍân.[2] One report mentions specifically that the first Qur'ânic revelation came to the Prophet in the night of 21 Ramaḍân.[3] Also a number of other reports have it that the Prophet said he was born on a Monday and received the first revelation on a Monday.[4] A recent calculation shows that the first Monday after 20 Ramaḍân in the 41st year of the Prophet's life falls on 21 Ramaḍân. It may therefore be said that the first revelation on Mount Ḥirâ' came in the night of 21 Ramaḍân during the 41st year of the Prophet's life (610- 611 C.E.).

Reference should be made in this connection, however, to three reports which mention, respectively, 17, 18, and 24 Ramaḍân as the date of the first revelation.[5] It should be noted that none of these reports may be regarded as authentic, for none of them goes back to the time of the Prophet and there are either unidentified (مجهول) or untrustworthy persons in the chains of narrators. Hence these reports cannot be given preference to the authentic ones cited above.

It may also be pointed out that in describing the beginning of revelation Ibn Isḥâq quotes, in addition to the *'âyahs* cited above, *'âyahs* 8:41 (*sûrat al-Naḥl*) which says: "... if you believe in Allah and in what We sent down to Our servant on the day of distinguishing (between right and wrong) — the day of the meeting of the two hosts..." Ibn Isḥâq appears to have taken the expression "what We sent down to Our servant" as implying the revelation of the Qur'ân to the Prophet and points out that the day referred to here is that of the battle of Badr which took place on Friday, 17 Ramaḍan (2 H.).[6]

1. Some scholars take the "Blessed Night" mentioned in 44:3 to be the one in mid-Sha'bân. There is however no authentic *ḥadîth* in support of this view. Moreover, this view would in effect put 44:3 and 97:1 at variance with each other; for there is no difference of opinion about the "Night of Power" being in the month of Ramaḍân. As both the passages speak about the sending down of the Qur'ân, it cannot be suggested that the Qur'ân gives two different dates for the event.

2. See for instance Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr*, VIII, 468-470.

3. Al-Ḥâkim, *Al-Mustadrak*, III, 143.

4. Ibn Sa'd, I, 193-194; Al-Ṭabarî, *Târîkh*, II, 293 (I / 1141-1142).

5. Ibn Sa'd, I, 194; Al-Ṭabarî, *Târîkh*, II, 293-294 (I / 1142-1143).

6. Ibn Hishâm, I, 240.

Al-Ṭabarî also quotes this *'âyah* in support of the report which mentions 17 Ramaḍân as the date of the first revelation.[1] Following them some modern scholars have cited this *'âyah* as well in saying that the first revelation took place on 17 Ramaḍân. Further, to make this dating tally with what is stated in *'âyah* 44:3 and 97:1 it has been suggested that the "Blessed Night" or "Night of Power" in that year fell on 17 Ramaḍân.[2]

Now, there is no doubt that the *'âyah* 8:41 refers to the battle of Baḍr; but the expression "what We sent down to Our servant on the day of distinguishing" etc. does not mean the revelation of the Qur'ân as such. Nor does the context refer to that matter. It means the unseen assistance sent by Allah to the Prophet and the Muslims on that day. It also refers to the injunctions revealed on that occasion about the distribution of the spoils of war (*ghanîmah*). Indeed the statement in question is only the concluding part of a rather lengthy *'âyah* which begins with a description of the rules regarding the subject and adds the expression "if you believe etc." by way of emphasizing the need to abide by the rules laid down in this respect. None of the recognized commentators of the Qur'ân thinks that the allusion here is to the revelation of the Qur'ân. In fact all of them, including, interestingly enough, Al-Ṭabarî,[3] interpret the expression in question as meaning Allah's assistance (sending down of angels, etc.) on that day and the injuctions regarding the distribution of spoils of war.[4] It is also noteworthy that the term used in 8:41 is *yawm* (day); and although *yawm* in Arabic includes night as well, where "night" is specifically mentioned it means only night and does not include 'day'. Both 44:3 and 97:1 specifically mention "night" as the time of the first revelation, thereby excluding 'day' in connection with that event. On this ground too it would not by appropriate to adduce the statement in 8:41 in support of the date of the first revelation.

As regards the concept of *waḥy* (revelation) and its nature, particulary the nature of Qur'ânic *waḥy*, we shall have occasion to speak in a subsequent chapter. Here something should be said about the very early revelations and

1. Al-Ṭabarî, *Târîkh*, II, 294.

2. See for instance Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad 'Abû Shahbah, *Sirat al-Rasûl Fî Ḍaw' al-Qur'ân wa al-Sunnah*, 1., Damascus, 1409 / 1988, pp. 259-260.

3. Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr*, X, 8-9.

4. See comments on this *'âyah* (8:41) in the *tafsîrs* of Ibn Kathîr, Al-Qurṭubî, Al-Zamakhsharî, Al-Bayḍâwî, Al-Shawkânî, Al-Baghâwî, Al-Suyûṭî, and Ibn al-Jawzî.

their main teachings.

VI. THE EARLY REVELATIONS AND THEIR TEACHINGS

It has already been noted that after the receipt of the first revelation at Mount Ḥirâ' there was a pause in the coming of further *waḥy* to the Prophet. Reports vary regarding the length of this pause. Some say it lasted for a number of days not exceeding forty, some say it was for several months, while the others say that it was for two or three years.[1] The first view seems to be the correct one; for the pause was intended to give the Prophet a time to recover from the shock of the new experience and to enable him to settle himself with his new status. It is thus just not reasonable to assume that no further communication came to him for so long a time as two or three years. Secondly, two of the authentic reports relating to the Prophet's seeing the angel Jibrîl in the sky and thereafter receiving the second revelation clearly indicate that this took place shortly after his return from the cave of Ḥirâ' and not at all after years or months of that event.[2] Thirdly, it is an established fact that during the first three years of his mission the Prophet made a number of converts to Islam, started praying and towards the end of that period began openly calling his people to accept Islam. It is therefore simply inconceivable that he did all these without receiving any further revelation during that period. Fourthly, almost half of the Makkan part of the Qur'ân had been revealed before the revelation of *sûrat al-Naḥl* in which there is an indication to the Muslims' migration to Abyssinia which took place in the fifth vear of the mission. It is thus obvious that almost half of the Makkan part of the Qur'ân had been revealed during the first four years. Hence it is unlikely that for the first three years no further revelation came to the Prophet. Thus the pause in the coming of *waḥy* lasted at the most for several days or weeks.[3] At the end of that period the Prophet one day saw Jibrîl in the sky, as related earlier, and came back home with panic and asked his family to cover him. It was then that the next revelation came to him. It consisted of the first five *'âyahs* of *sûrat al-Muddaththir* (no.74). Thereafter revelations started coming to him regularly and without interruption.[4]

Reports regarding the order of revelations also are various and divergent.

1. See *Fatḥ al-Bârî*, I, 36-37; XII, 376-377.
2. *Bukhârî*, nos. 4922, 4924.
3. *Fatḥ al-Bârî*, I, 36-37; XII, 376-377; Ibn Sa'd, I, 191, 196. See also Muḥammad 'Izzat Darwazah, *op.cit.*, I, 137-138: Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad 'Abû Shahbah, *op.cit.*, I, 264. Sha'bî's report saying that the angel Isrâfîl instructed the Prophet for three years in various matters is not reliable.
4. *Bukhârî*, nos. 4, 3232, 4925, 4926, 4954.

Nevertheless there is a general unanimity among the authorities that the first few *'âyahs* each of *surahs al-'Alaq* (no.96), *al-Muddaththir* (no.74), *al-Qalam* (no.68) and *al-Muzzammil* (no.73) were the very earliest that were revealed. The remaining portions of these *surahs* were revealed subsequently; but from their internal evidence it appears that these also were not much later in time, except the last *'âyah* of *sûrat al-Muzzammil* (73:20) which was revealed at Madina.[1] Also there are reports that assign *sûrahs al-Fâtiḥah* (no.1), *al-Ḍuḥâ* (no.93) and *al-Sharḥ* (no.94) a very early date, some holding that *al-Fâtiḥah* was the very first in the order of reveations. However, according to the generally accepted order of revelations the first ten *sûrahs* are as follows:[2]

(1) *Al-'Alaq,*	(*surah* no. 96)
(2) *Al-Muddaththir*	(" " 74)
(3) *Al-Qalam*	(" " 68)
(4) *Al-Muzzammil*	(" " 73)
(5) *Al-Fâtiḥah*	(" " 1)
(6) *Al-Masad*	(" " 101)
(7) *Al-Takwîr*	(" " 81)
(8) *Al- 'A'lâ*	(" " 87)
(9) *Al-Layl*	(" " 92)
(10) *Al-Fajr*	(" " 89)

It may be noted that some of these *surahs* contain allusions to the reaction of the Makkan unbelievers. This means that the Prophet had entered upon his mission as soon as he received the order contained in *'âyah* 2 of *sûrat al-Muddaththir* ("Rise and warn" - قم فأنذر) and that the opposition of the unbelievers started simultaneously.[3] Besides the above mentioned *surahs* there are a number of other *surahs* that are free from such allusions to the unbelievers. These *sûrahs,* as one scholar points out,[4] must also have been revealed at an early stage, most probably even before the later portions of *al-*

1. See for instance the *tafsîrs* of Al-Bayḍâwî and Al-Jalâlayn on this *sûrah.*

2. See the tables given in M. Khalîfa, *The Sublime Qur'ân and Orientalism*, London and New York, 1983, Appendix II, pp. 224-227 and 'Izzat Darwazah, *op.cit.*, I, 145-149.

3. See below, Ch. XXI, sec.I for a discussion on the theory of "secret" preaching for the first three years.

4. Muḥammad 'Izzat Darwazah, *op.cit.*, I, 134.

'Alaq, *al-Qalam*, *al-Muddaththir*, etc. Leaving aside this type of *sûrahs*, however, and taking into account only the ten above mentioned *sûrahs*, it may be stated that the basic teachings of Islam were all communicated in essence during the very initial period. These teachings may be grouped under the following heads:

(1) *Tawḥîd* (monotheism) in all its aspects, i.e., *tawḥîd al-rububiyyah* (the absolute Oneness and Exclusiveness of Allah as Creator, Sustainer, etc.), *tawḥîd al-'uluhiyyah* (the absolute Oneness and Exclusiveness of Allah as the object of worship and solicitation) and *tawḥîd al-'Asmâ' wa al-Ṣ ifât* (uniqueness of Names and Attributes).[1]

(2) Prayer (*ṣalât*) together with cleanliness (*ṭahârah*).

(3) *Risâlah*, i.e. the Messengership of Muḥammad (ﷺ)

(4) *al-'Âkhirah*, i.e., Life after death (the Resurrection, Judgement, Reward and Punishment).

(5) Individual responsibility on the Day of Judgement.

(6) Social responsibility of the wealthy and denunciation of blind materialism.

(7) Special instructions and words of encouragement and comfort to the Prophet.

(1) *Tawḥîd*: Monotheism (*tawḥîd)* is the central theme round which the entire teachings and injunctions of Islam revolve. So far as the first revelation is concerned this theme is conveyed by the expressions *rabb* and *khalaqa* used in the first two *'âyahs* of *sûrat al-'Alaq*. The meaning of *rabb* cannot be expressed by a single word of any other language, for instance by 'lord' in English; for the Arabic *rabb* has a comprehensive connotation of One Who creates, sustains, nourishes, develops and determines the growth, evolution and destiny of an object with generosity and care. Nothing could therefore be a more appropriate start for the revelation than to emphasize this attribute of God as the Creator and Sustainer. This is made all the more specific by the term *khalaqa* (created) used in the same first *'âyah* of the *sûrah*.

1. Non-Muslims, especially Christians, do not appear to be aware of these aspects of monotheism. They generally concentrate only on the first mentioned aspect and seem to think that this is the sole cocept of monotheism. Many of their onfusions may be traced to this lack of understanding of the other aspects of monotheism, particularly the second one, namely, *tawḥîd al-'ulûhiyyah* or Exclusiveness of Allah (God) as the Sole Object of worship and adoration.

The non-specification of any object to the verb is significant. It implies the "creation" as a whole embracing the universe and all that exists. After this reference to the creation in general, particular mention is made of man. It is pointed out that he also is created by Allah Alone. In this connection it is further mentioned how the Divine will and plan in the process of creation of man is executed. The initial two *'âyahs* of the *sûrah* thus speak of the origin of the universe as well as of man. They assert categorically that all that exists is created, ordered and fashioned by God Alone. Consequently these *'ayahs* also negative any suggestion, which an atheist is prone to advance, that the universe and man come into existence by 'chance', through the process of "natural evolution".

The concept of evolution in the sense of growth, development, fulfilment and fruition of each object and being, not in the sense of transformation of one species into another, is recognized, however. Indeed it is inherent in the term *rabb,* which includes the sense of nourisher, sustainer, etc. What is emphasized is that the growth, development and fulfilment of anything or being is also an act of God and a mark of His bounty. In this respect He is the "Most Bountiful", *al-'Akram.* An illustration of this attribute is His gift of that quality to man which constitutes the element of his highest development, namely, his intelligence, undersatnding and knowledge. Even the faculty which enables him to make use of the pen as the means of acquiring, preserving and transmitting knowledge is a gift of God Alone.

The concept of *tawḥîd al-rubûbiyyah* thus emphasized in the initial *'âyahs* of *sûrat al-'Alaq* is more plainly and clearly stated in the first *'âyah* of *sûrat al-Fâtiḥah* — "All praise is due to Allah, the *Rabb* of all the worlds." The expression "all the worlds" (*al-'âlamîn*) is very significant. It indicates the comprehensiveness and perfection of Allah's creation as well as the nature and characteristics of each unit of creation. For, on a closer look, it should be clear to anyone that each individual unit or item of God's creation, for instance a man or a constellation, constitutes a world by itself. Similarly, the second *'âyah* of the *sûrah* emphasizes God's attribute of mercy and bounty — "He is the Universally Compassionate (*al-Raḥmân* الرحمـٰن), the "Supremely Kind" (*al-Raḥîm* الرحيم). The same concept of *tawḥîd al-Rubûbiyyah* is repeated in 87:2-3 (*surat al-'A'lâ*) thus: "(He), Who created and gave final form and shape; (He) Who determined the proportions and guided."[1]

1. The text runs thus: ﴿الذى خلق فسوّى * والذى قدر فهدى﴾

Along with this inculcation of the concept of *tawḥîd al-rubûbiyyah* the theme of *tawḥîd al-'ulûhiyyah* also was brought home. Indeed the latter was only a natural outcome of the former. Since Allah alone is the Creator, Sustainer, etc., it therefore behoves man to worship and beseech Him Alone, to the exclusion of every other being or thing. In fact this latter aspect of monotheism was more significant in the context of the contemporary Arabian situation; for though polytheism and idol-worship ran rampant, the idea of Allah as the Supreme Creator and Arbiter had not been totally lost sight of. In fact the gods and goddesses were set up as intermediaries and intercessors with Allah. In this context the emphasis on *tawḥîd al-'ulûhiyyah*, that is, the need and propriety of worshipping Allah Alone to the exclusion of all other entities and deities, was very essential. This concept is expressed in 1:4 thus: "Thee do we worship and Thine aid we seek."[1] The same thing is conveyed in 73:9 more unmistakably thus: "He is the *Rabb* of the east and the west. There is none entitled to be worshipeed (*'ilâh* إلـه) except He. So take Him as your Guardian-Trustee."[2]

(2) Prayer: The practical implementation of *tawḥîd al-'ulûhiyyah* was the performance of prayer and worship to Allah Alone. This was therefore also enjoined in the early revelations. The earliest passage containing an exhortation to prayer is 73:2 which asks the Prophet to "Stand (in prayer) by night, except for a little while of it﴿قم الّيل إلا قليلا﴾." All the commentators agree in saying that "stand by night" here means standing in prayer (*ṣalât*). Similarly 74:42-43 makes it clear that the duty to perform prayer had already been enjoined before the revelation of this passage. For, it says that when on the Day of Judgement the sinners will be asked what had led them to the hell, they will reply: "We were not of those who prayed"﴿قالوا لم نك من المصلين﴾. Conversely, 87:14-15 says that those who purify themselves, recite their Lord's name and pray will prosper and be successful ﴿قد أفلح من تزكّى*وذكر اسم ربه فصلّى﴾. More positive and ummistakable is, however, the passage 96:9-19. The first *'âyah* in this passage refers to an opponent of Islam who forbade a servant of Allah (عبداً i.e. the Prophet) while he set himself to perform prayer. Then *'âyahs* 10-18 make further remarks about that opponent and exhorts in the concluding *'âyah* thus: "Nay, never obey him; but prostrate yourself and come close to God."[3] The sequence of the *'âyahs* conclusively demonstrates

1. The text runs thus: ﴿إياك نعبد وإياك نستعين﴾
2. The text runs thus: ﴿رب المشرق والمغرب لا إلـه إلا هو فاتخذه وكيلا﴾
1. The text runs as follows: ﴿كلا لا تطعه واسجد واقترب﴾

that the expression "prostrate yourself and come closer to God" constitutes a positive order to continue performing prayer (*ṣalât*) disregarding the opposition of the enemy of Islam. It also implies that *ṣalât* is the best means of coming closer to God.

Indeed the first thing the Prophet was instructed to do after his call to prophethood was prayer (*ṣalât*). It is related that once when he was in the upper part of Makka the angel Jibrîl appeared before him in the form of a human being and performed ablution (*waḍû* or ceremonial cleanliness) in front of him in order to show him how to make it. Next Jibrîl prayed two *raka'ahs* of prayer, making the Prophet pray with him and then departed. The Prophet returned home and showed Khadîjah (r.a.) how to make ablution and pray. Accordingly she also performed ablution and prayed. [1]

(3) *Risâlah* (i.e. the Messengership of Muḥammad, ﷺ): The third point illustrated by the earliest revelations is that Muḥammad (ﷺ) had been commissioned as Allah's Messenger (*Rasûl*). In Islamic parlance the technical distinction between a *nabî* (prophet) and a *rasûl* (messenger) is that while both receive revelation from Allah, it is only the *rasûl* who is specifically commissioned to deliver and propagate it to men. This commission Muḥammad (ﷺ) received with the revelation of the first few *'âyahs* of *sûrat al-Muddaththir* (no.74) which starts by addressing the Prophet as follows:

﴿ يَـٰأيها المدثر * قم فأنذر * وربك فكبّر ﴾ (٧٤ : ١-٣)

"O wrapped in mantle, get up and warn; and your Lord, declare His supremacy." (74:1-3)

There is here a definite command to "warn" the people about the consequences of their deeds and to communicate to them the instructions contained in the revelations. Indeed, the very first and most important instruction to be given is also specified here, namely, "and your Lord, declare His supremacy". It meant that the Prophet was commanded to tell men that Allah is the Greatest (*Allahu 'Akbar* الله اكبر). In other words he was to declare that everything else including the imaginary gods and goddesses were subservient and subordinate to Allah. This is also an exhortation about *tawḥîd*. All the authorities agree in stating that with the revelation of the above mentioned passage the Prophet was specifically entrusted with the task of *risâlah*. It might be added that the sense of *risâlah* is implicit even in the first revelation; for the exhortation to "read" and the reference to "pen" contained therein implied that the Prophet was on the threshold of being entrusted with a scripture (*kitâb*) which he was to read out and which was to be preserved

1. Ibn Hishâm, I, 243-244; *Musnad*, IV, 161; Al-Ṭabarî, *Târîkh*, II, 307 (I / 1157).

and disseminated by means of the pen as well.

That Muḥammad (ﷺ) was commissioned as Allah's *rasûl* is stated more directly in *'âyah* 15 of *sûrat al-Muzzammil* wherein Allah says:

﴿إنا أرسلنا إليكم رسولا شـٰـهدا عليكم كما أرسلنا إلى فرعون رسولا﴾ (٧٣:١٥)

"We have indeed sent to you a Messenger to be a witness concerning you, just as we had sent a Messenger to Pharaoh." (73:15).

The address is obviously made to Muḥammad's (ﷺ) contemporary as well as subsequent generations of men. The comparison with the Messenger sent to Pharaoh, i.e., with Mûsâ (p.b.h.) is meaningful. Like him, Muḥammad (ﷺ) also was a Messenger with a scripture containing clear rules of guidance and laws for man's conduct.

Some further references to Muḥammad's (ﷺ) having been commissioned as Allah's Messenger and his role as such are contained in 74:52-54 (*sûrat al-Muddaththir*), 81:15-19 (*sûrat al-Takwîr*) and 87:18-19 (*sûrat al-'A'lâ*). The first passage (74:52-54) refers to the Makkan unbelievers' importunity in demanding that they be each given an open scroll of revelation ﴿صحفا منشرة﴾ and emphasizes that such could never have been the case and that what the Prophet was delivering to them was "certainly a memento" ﴿كلا إنه تذكرة﴾. Similarly the passage 81:15-29 declares, in protest against the unbelievers' various allegations, that the Prophet was neither "one possessed" (مجنون) nor giving out "the words of a satan" ﴿وما هو بقول شيطان﴾, but he was delivering only what he had received through the angel whom he saw in the clear horizon ﴿بالأفق المبين﴾ and that it was indeed "a revelation to all the worlds" ﴿إن هو إلا ذكر للعـٰـلمين﴾. The passage thus clearly depicts the Prophet as delivering the revelation he had received. More specific is 87:9 which categorically commands the Prophet as follows: ﴿فذكر إن نفعت الذكرى﴾ (٨٧:٩)

"Therefore admonish; verily admonition benefits."

(4) *The Life after death* (الآخرة): This subject occupies an important place in the early revelations. In fact in all the 10 *sûrahs* under consideration it finds prominent mention. And significantly enough, the very *sûrat al-'Alaq* which starts with a mention of man's origin also points out his ultimate destination —"Verily to thy Lord (*Rabb*) is the return." ﴿إن إلى ربك الرجعى﴾. This short but incisive expression underscores another basic fact, namely, the transitoriness of man's life on earth. In contrast, the life in the hereafter, *al-'Âkhirah*, is described as the best and more enduring ﴿والآخرة خير وأبقى﴾.[1] The

1. 87:17 (*sûrat al-'A'lâ*).

starting point of that life is the end of the world, followed by resurrection (*al-ba'th*) and the Day of Judgement (*al-qiyâmah; yawm al-dîn*). Allah Alone is the Master of that Day.[1] Some graphic accounts of those inevitable events are provided, for instance, by 81:1-14 (*sûrat al-Takwîr*), 73:12-14 (*sûrat al-Muzzammil*), 74:8-10, 26-31, 35-51, 53 (*sûrat al-Muddaththir*), 87:12-13 (*sûrat al-'A'la*), 89:21-30 (*Sûrat al-Fajr*) and 92:13-18 (*sûrat al-Layl*). By way of illustration only the first mentioned passage may be quoted. It runs as follows:

﴿إذا الشمس كورت * وإذا النجوم انكدرت * وإذا الجبال سيرت * وإذا العشار عطلت * وإذا الوحوش حشرت * وإذا البحار سجرت * وإذا النفوس زوجت * وإذا الموءُدة سـئلت * بأى ذنب قتلت * وإذا الصحف نشرت * وإذا السماء كشطت * وإذا الجحيم سعرت * وإذا الجنة أزلفت * علمت نفس ما أحضرت﴾ (٨١ : ١- ١٤)

"When the sun is folded up; when the stars lose their lustre; when the mountains are scattered; when the ten-month pregnant she-camels are left unattended; when the wild beasts are herded together (with men); when the oceans are made to boil and burn; when the souls are reunited (with their bodies); when the female infant buried alive shall be asked, for what sin was she killed; when the scrolls (of deeds) shall be unfolded; when the sky shall be laid bare; when the hell (*jahannam*) shall be set blazing and when the paradise (*jannah*) shall be brought near, then shall each individual know what it wrought." (81:1-14).

In fact the most important aspect of the Prophet's mission was to remind man about the life in the hereafter, to warn him about the trials of resurrection, the Day of Judgement and about the dire consequences for the wrong-doers. At the same time he delivered good tidings of an eternal and blissful life for the virtuous. Hence he is often described as *bashîr* and *nadhîr* (Conveyer of good tidings and Warner, respectively) in the Qur'ân.

(5) *Individual responsibility*: On the Day of Judgement every person will be singly and individually accountable for his deeds. No one else's intercession or atonement will be of any avail on that day. Every person will be rewarded or punished according to his performances in this world. This is clearly emphasized in the last *'âyah* of the passage quoted above as well as in 74:38 which runs as follows: ﴿كل نفس بما كسبت رهينة﴾

"Every individual is a pledge for what it acquires (of merits and demerits)." (74:38)

(6) *Social responsibility of the wealthy*: But man becomes oblivious of the life in the hereafter, indeed of God, because of his total absorption in worldly life and because of his blind materialism and inordinate love for wealth. This

1. 1:4 (*sûrat al-Fâtiḥah*).

in turn makes him selfish, haughty and cruel not only towards his more unfortunate fellow-beings, but even towards his own kith and kin. This fatal social and moral malady is identified in the early revelations and man is warned against it. Thus 87:16 remarks: "Nay (behold), you prefer the life of this world ﴿بل تؤثرون الحيوٰة الدنيا﴾,[1] while in fact the life in the hereafter is the best and the more enduring. He is therefore reminded of the immense social responsibility that wealth entails. It is pointed out that he will attain a successful and happy life in the hereafter only if he acts up to that responsibility. Thus 92:5 says:

﴿فأما من أعطىٰ واتّقىٰ * وصدق بالحسنىٰ * فسنيسره لليسرىٰ * وأما من بخل واستغنىٰ * وكذب بالحسنىٰ * فسنيسرهُ للعسرىٰ * وما يغنى عنه ماله إذا تردىٰ﴾ (٩٢: ٥- ١١)

"So he who gives in charity and fears God, and testifies to the truth of the best (i.e. monotheism[2]), We shall indeed make smooth for him the path of bliss; but he who is avaricious and deems himself self-sufficient, and rejects the truth of what is the best, We shall indeed make smooth for him the path to misery. Nor shall his wealth be of avail to him when he perishes." (92:5-11)

Continuing the theme the same *sûrah* further says that those who thus fail in their duty are really the "the most unfortunate ones" (الأشقى) and it is they who will enter the blazing fire. On the other hand, those who spend their wealth in self-purification and for the sake of God, they will be considered the "most devoted" ones (الأتقى) and they will soon be happy and pleased. ﴿ولسوف يرضىٰ﴾.[3]

Affluence is indeed a test for man. He should not be puffed up with it, thinking himself to be God's favoured one. Nor should straitened circumstances make him despair of God. Man should not be a slave to mammon, nor should he ever arrogate to himself what is not his share of fortune. He should always be alive to his duty towards the poor, the orphan and the needy. These teachings are very effectively communicated in 89: 15-23 which runs as follows:

﴿فأما الإنسٰن إذا ما ابتلٰـهُ ربه فأكرمه ونعمه فيقول ربّى أكرمن * وأما إذا ما ابتلٰـهُ فقدر عليه رزقه فيقول ربّى أهٰنن * كلا بل لا تكرمون اليتيم * ولا تحٰضّون على طعام المسكين * وتأكلون التراث أكلا لمّا * وتحبون المال حبًّا جمًّا * كلا إذا دكت الأرض دكًّا دكًّا * وجاء ربُّكَ والملكُ صفًّا صفًّا * وجاىء يومئذ بجهنم يومئذ يتذكر الإنسٰنُ وأنّىٰ له الذكرىٰ﴾ (٨٩: ١٥- ٢٣)

1. Q. 87:16 (*sûrat al-'A'lâ).*
2. See for instance *Tafsîr al-Bayḍâwî* and *Tafsîr al-Jalâlayn* on this *'âyah.*
3. 92:15-21 (*sûrat al-Layl*).

"As for man, when his Lord puts him to test, bestowing upon him honour and fortune, he says: 'My Lord has honoured me'; but when He puts him to test (in another way) and limits his means, he says: 'My Lord has disgraced me.' Nay, rather you do not respect (the claims of) the orphan, nor do you urge one another to feed the poor; and you eat up (another's share in) the inheritance, devouring it entirely, and you love wealth with absorbing fondness. Nay, when the earth is pounded to powder, and your Lord makes His Apperance and the angels file up in rows — that day, when the hell is brought forth — that day man will recollect (the admonitions), but of what avail will it be for him to recollect then!" (89:15-23).

(7) *Special instructions to the Prophet*: The other aspect of the early revelations was some words of consolation and special instructions for the Prophet. The first thing to note in this connection is the very affectionate terms used in addressing the Prophet at two early occasions — the revelation of the first few *'âyahs* respectively of *sûrahs al-Muddaththir* (no.74) and *al-Muzzammil* (no. 73). The expressions used are, respectively, "O you covered in mantle" and "O you enwrapped in robes", instead of "O Muḥammad" (ﷺ) or "O Prophet". Reports regarding the revelation of these passages say that the Prophet, being panic-stricken on seeing the angel Jibrîl in his actual form in the sky, hurried back home and had himself covered with a mantle or cloak. Hence this form of address. But whatever the occasion and situation there is no doubt that the specific forms of address were intended to convey to the Prophet the depth of affection and consideration with which he was being treated and to reassure him that he was indeed chosen of God.

The first of these passages (i.e. the first seven *'âyahs* of *sûrat al-Muddaththir*) also contains two special instructions to the Prophet relating to the work of propagation which he was enjoined in the second *'âyah* to embark upon. One of these instructions is given in the sixth *'âyah* which says "Do not show favour expecting to get an increase of it in return" (ولا تمنن تستكثر). In other words, though the revelation which the Prophet was commissioned to deliver was a great boon to mankind, he was not to expect any worldly gains out of that work. From the very start, thus, it was emphasized that the Prophet's mission was for the sake of Allah alone, not for any self-interest or personal motive.

The second item of instruction is contained in *'âyah* 7 which says: "And for (the cause of) your Lord, be patient and constant" ﴿ولربك فاصبر﴾. This was a very timely and important piece of advice as well as a forewarning of the shape of things to come. It indicated that the task he was being entrusted

with (i.e. propagation and giving warning) would entail immense hardships, opposition and enmity of others and that he should face them all with complete patience and constancy for the sake of Allah. The same warning is discernible in 73:5 which says: "Soon We shall send down to you a weighty word." ﴿إنا سنلقي عليك قولا ثقيلا﴾.

Other special instructions and consolatory expressions contained in the early passages relate to the opposition and obstinacy of the unbelievers. These would therefore be considered when that topic is taken up in a subsequent chapter. It may only be noted here that the teachings outlined above are based only on the ten *sûrahs* mentioned at the beginning of this section. Needless to say, the same teachings and instructions form the bulk of the subject-matter of the Qur'ân and they are repeated and elaborated with numerous evidences and illustrations in the rest of the *sûrahs*.

Before proceeding to see how the Prophet started the work of propagation and with what results, it would be appropriate to take note of the views and assumptions of the orientalists about *waḥy* in general.

CHAPTER XVII

WAḤY AND THE ORIENTALISTS: 1. THE VIEWS OF MUIR AND MARGOLIOUTH

The coming of *waḥy* to Muḥammad (ﷺ) is the central affair of his life. His claim to Prophethood and Messengership of Allah, the genuineness of the Qur'ân as Allah's words and status of Islam as a divinely communicated religion, all rest upon this affair. Naturally, therefore, the subject of *waḥy* has received the orientalists' major attention and they have advanced a good deal of assumptions and theories about it. In general, the aim of all these theories and assumptions is to show, by one device or another, that the texts of revelations making up the Qur'ân were Muḥammad's (ﷺ) own composition. The most that the professedly objective orientalists concede is that Muḥammad (ﷺ) might have been sincere in his conviction that he was inspired by God; nevertheless the texts he gave out as revelation were the products of his own mind and thought.

It is understandable that no Jew or Christian, nor, for that matter, a non-Muslim, could conscientiously admit that Muḥammad (ﷺ) was God's Messenger and that the Qur'ân is God's words without sacrificing his conviction or without being sceptical about his own faith. What is special with the orientalists, however, is that they do not leave the matter there by simply denying divine origin for the Qur'ân and divine commission for Muḥammad (ﷺ). They proceed further than that and endeavour to show, from the Islamic sources and texts, that that really is the case. And in so far as they do so, they in effect assume the role of missionaries of their own faiths and their writings degenerate in most cases into sophisticated anti-Islamic propaganda in the garb of historical research.

The present and the following three chapters examine the views of the orientalists about the coming of *waḥy* to the Prophet. An attempt has been made to analyze the arguments and reasonings of the orientalists themselves, pointing out the faults and defects in them, and also to show how they have twisted the facts and misinterpreted the texts in their attempt to sustain their assumptions. The present chapter deals with the views of Muir and Margoliouth. And as Watt seems to have inherited their ideas not directly from them but through his preceptor Bell, it has been thought necessary to deal with the latter's handling of the subject in the following chapter before

passing on to a consideration of Watt's treatment of it.

I. MUIR'S ASSUMPTIONS

Muir proceeds with his basic assumption that Muḥammad (ﷺ) was ambitious and that being depressed by the debasement of his people he sought relief in meditation and reflection at Mount Ḥirâ'. Gradually his "impulsive and susceptible mind", as Muir puts it, was "wrought up to the highest pitch of excitement" and certain grand ideas, namely, God the Sole Creator and Ruler, the wretchedness of heathenism and idolatry, resurrection, judgement and recompense of good and evil, and life after death, etc., took clear and definite shape before him. He gave vent to this realization and to his "inward struggling after truth" in "wild rhapsodical language, enforced often with incoherent oaths", in "fragments" of poetry and "soliloquy full of melancholy reflection upon the state and prospects of mankind" and in prayers for guidance. As instances of these early "fragments", as Muir terms them, he quotes in his own translation *sûrahs* 103 (*al-'asr*) and 100 (*al-'Âdiyât*); and as instances of "soliloquy" and prayer he quotes, respectively, *sûrahs* 101 (*al-Qâri'ah*) and 1 (*al-Fâtiḥah*).[1] Muir admits that these were "couched in words of rare force and beauty". Sometimes the "oracle", further says Muir, came "direct from the Deity, speaking as 'We', and to Mahomet as 'Thou'."[2] As an instance of this last category he quotes in translation *sûrah* 95 (*al-Tîn*).

Yet, continues Muir, the conviction of being inspired was not attained by Muḥammad (ﷺ). It came to him "after a protracted period of mental throes." In the meantime he is said to have raised the "voice of expostulation and alarm", as in *sûrah* 104 (*al-Humazah*), and to have alluded to Arab and Jewish legends as well as to "national miracles" and sentiments. As instances of these, part of *sûrah* 89 (*al-Fajr*) and *sûrahs* 105 and 106 (*al-Fîl* and *al-'Îlâf*) in full are quoted in translation.[3] Muḥammad, (ﷺ) says Muir, was still groping for the truth, and *sûrah* 90 (*al-Balad*) is quoted in full in translation in support of this statement.[4]

According to Muir the Prophet thus continued to give "vent to his reveries in poetry" for several years "before he assumed the office of a divine teacher."[5] During this period a small group including Waraqah, 'Alî,

1. Muir, *Life etc.*, 3 rd edn., 35-39.
2. *Ibid.*, 39.
3. *Ibid.*, 39-40.
4. *Ibid.*, 41.
5. *Ibid.*

Khadîjah and 'Abû Bakr (r.a.) are said to have become his followers, the first three putting the early *sûrahs* to writing, for "Mahomet did not himself write."[1] Outside that little circle, continues Muir, his "warning and expostulation were met by gross ignorance and repellent darkness"— his kind uncle 'Abû Ṭâlib smiled at his enthusiasm, another uncle, 'Abû Lahab, mocked at him, while the Quraysh leader 'Abû Jahl and his group sneered at him and the general body of Quraysh remained "careless and indifferent."

At such stage, says Muir, the need for appearing as a Prophet was brought home to Muḥammad (ﷺ) when, the "more susceptible among the citizens", while listening to him, pointed out that they would lead a purer life if a Prophet was sent to them, just as Prophets had been sent to the Jews and Christians. In support of this statement Muir cites the Qur'ânic passage 35:42 [2] and says that Muḥammad (ﷺ) "felt the force of the reply" and made a searching of his own heart whereby he came to the conviction that "the flow of burning thought, the spontaneous burst of eloquence, and the heavenly speech" which he had been putting forth all constituted a "supernatural call, a divine mission".[3] In such a state of "grievous mental distraction" and "deep depression", says Muir, Muḥammad (ﷺ) sought reassurance in God's past favours on him as is evident from *sûrahs* 93 (*al-Ḍuḥâ*) and 94 (*al-Sharḥ*).[4] Nonetheless his mental tension was so insupportable that he several times meditated suicide, for, as the Qur'ân emphasizes, no sin was more fearful "than to speak falsely in the name of God." Thus, as he was once about to throw himself headlong from one of the wild cliffs, he was held back by an "invisible" influence. He was still not sure whether that influence was divine or diabolical; but his wife Khadîjah (r.a.) "tried the spirits" and assured him that his "visitant" was not "wicked, but innocent and virtuous". Thereupon belief in divine mission "mingled with ambition" was revived in him and he started visualizing a united people abjuring idolatry.[5] He also pondered over the instances of Mûsa and "other Jewish chieftains" and persuaded himself that the people of Syria, Persia, Egypt, Abyssinia, etc, "weary of strife and discord", would flock to him if he proclaimed himself what he surely felt

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ibid.*, 42.
3. *Ibid.*, 42-43.
4. *Ibid.* 43. Quoted here in full.
5. *Ibid.*, 44. Muir supports this statement by quoting *sûrah* 110.

himself to be —"the Prophet of the Lord."[1] Ultimately his convictions were confirmed, says Muir, by "ecstatic trances" and he "fancied that he perceived a mission."[2] He awaited the inspiring influence of "the Holy Spirit".

In such a state of mind, while seated or wandering amidst the peaks of Ḥirâ', "an apparition rose before him". Jibrîl stood "close and clear beside him in a vision" and "approaching within 'two bow-lengths', brought from his master the memorable behest of *sûrat al-'Alaq*.[3] "Thus was Mahomet led", concludes Muir, "after a protracted period of doubt and hesitancy — to give forth his message as proceeding directly from the Almighty. Henceforth he spoke literally in the name of the Lord. And so scrupulous was he,... that every sentence of the Coran is prefaced by the divine command, SPEAK or SAY; which, if not expressed, is always to be understood."[4] Even after that he was taunted as a poet, a sorcerer or one possessed by the demons. Hence he fell back on his commission and in his perplexity stretched himself on his bed, wrapping his garments around him and "fell into a trance". The angel was "at hand" and the Prophet was "aroused from despondency to energy and action" by the reanimating message of *sûrat al-Muddaththir*.[5]

Muir claims that he has thus traced from the "various intimations gathered from the Coran itself" the steps by which Muḥammad (ﷺ) was led to assume the office of Prophet.[6] Muir then summarizes what he calls the traditional account by reproducing mainly the account given by Al-Wâqidî. In conclusion he refers to the manners and methods of the coming of wahy, which he calls the Prophet's "ecstatic periods" and says that those *were* "reveries of profound meditation, or swoons connected with morbid excitability of mental or physical constitution", which varied at different periods and under different circumstances.[7]

The implication of all these is that *waḥy* was something emanating from the Prophet's own mind and thought, the result of his reflection and contemplation. It was more or less a psychological phenomenon. Muir thus des-

1. *Ibid.*, 44-45.
2. *Ibid.*, 45.
3. *Ibid.*, 45-46. Muir quotes the entire *sûrah* in translation.
4. *Ibid.*, 46. Muir quotes in the footnote *sûrah* 112 (*al-'Ikhlâṣ*).
5. Ibid., 47-48. Muir Quotes in translahion the *sûrah* with slight omissions.
6. *Ibid.*,48.
7. *Ibid.*,51.

cribes the seeing of Jibrîl as "apparition"[1] or "vision", the Prophet's receipt of *waḥy* as "reveries"[2] and the instances of physical stresses which he sometimes experienced while receiving *waḥy* as "trance"[3] or "swoons"[4], etc.

The last mentioned aspect of Muir's suggestions is only an extension of his other assumption made in connection with the Prophet's childhood that he was a victim of epilepsy or fainting fits. This question has been dealt with earlier.[5] It may only be pointed out here, however, that later writers, though they seem to avoid using the terms epilepsy or fainting fits in connection with the coming of *waḥy*, in essence adopt the view in a modified form employing such terms as "self-hypnotism", "inducing of revelations", etc.

Also the view that *waḥy* was something emanating from the Prophet's consciousness and personality, rather than something extraneous to his own self, is indeed common to the writings of all the orientalists. Hence this point will be discussed when we have reveiwed the suggestions and reasonings of the others. Here the other assumptions of Muir may be discussed.

Muir's basic assumption is that Muḥammad (ﷺ) was ambitious and made preparations for playing the role of a Prophet. Yet it is suggested that he did not reach the conviction of being "inspired" till "after a protracted period of mental throes" and "honest striving after truth" and further that he gave vent to his "reveries" for "several years before he assumed the office of a divine teacher." Clearly the two strains are antithetical. If the Prophet had really been ambitious and had made plans and preparations for playing the role of a Prophet, he would not have embarked upon his project till after his plans had fully matured and he had settled his lines of action. On the other hand if, on account of his contemplation, reflection and "honest striving after truth" certain grand ideas "took clear and definite shape before him", then the Prophet did not obviously act according to prior plans and preparations. In fact Muir's theory that Muḥammad (ﷺ) felt the need for appearing as Prophet only after some of his listeners had said that they would lead a purer life if a Prophet was sent to them is a contradiction by himself of his theory

1. Meaning "the coming into view, especially of a ghost or the spirit of a dead person". *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, (ed.A.S. Hornby), 19th imp., 1984.

2. Meaning "condition of being lost in dreamy, pleasant thoughts". *Ibid.*

3. Meaning "sleep-like condition; abnormal dreamy state; hypnotic state". *Ibid.*

4. Meaning "fainting fit" (archaic). *Ibid.*

5. *Supra*, pp.156-159.

of ambiton and preparation on the Prophet's part.

In truth the case was neither the result of plans and peparation nor that of meditation and contemplation. The Prophet did of course engage himself in solitary prayer and reflection, but the text he delivered to his people was no result of his contemplation. It was something entirely extraneous to himself and he had in no way thought of it nor expected it. That was the reason why he was bewildered, puzzled and terrified at the sudden turn of events and was not initially sure of his new positon. His uncertainty was clearly due to the absence of any design and ambition on his part and to the suddenness and unexpectedness of the development. It also shows that the text which he recevied as revelation was no product of his thinking and reflection. But whatever the nature of his initial uncertainty and bewilderment, that state did not definitely last for "several years" and it was clearly the result of the coming of the first *waḥy* to him and of the circumstances attending it. Muir uses this "effect" of the coming of wahy to the Prophet as the cause and prior circusmtance of it — thus completely reversing the process of development as narrated in all the sources.

Muir states that the Prophet did not attain the conviction of being "inspired" till after a protracted period of mental throes and uncertainty and did not assume "the office of a divine teacher" for several years. Yet Muir would have us believe that the Prophet nonetheless preached his "ideas" in wild and impassioned language, in "fragments" of poetry and incoherent rhapsodies, and also called upon his people to accept his message so much so that while a small number became his followers, the generality of the Quraysh mocked at him and opposed him. Now, the questions that naturally suggest themselves to any reader of this account are: (a) Is it conceivable that a person who is not yet sure about his own position nor about the nature of his message would at the same time come out in the open, seek converts to his teachings and face insults and opposition in consequence? (b) Is it reasonable to assume that a group of persons, however small, would respond to his call unless they were convinced of the truth and divine origin of the message? And how could they be so while the preacher himself of the message was supposedly not so sure about himself and about the nature of his message? (c) Is it reasonable to think that the great body of the Quraysh would turn against the preacher unless they were sure about the seriousness of his calims and of his teachings? Muir does not of course ask himself these very natural questions but expects his readers to take the absurdity from him.

But the climax of inconsistency lies in the suggestion, on the one hand, that Muḥammad (ﷺ) did not give out his call "in the name of the Lord" till after several years of hesitation and groping for the truth, and, on the other, in the statement that during that initial period the "oracle" did sometimes "come direct from the Deity, speaking as 'We and to Maḥomet as 'Thou'." Now, one clearly fails to understand how this type of deliverences differ in any way from those made subsequently "in the name of the Lord". Indeed Muir's basic inconsistency lies in the fact that he cites as many as 18 Qur'ânic *sûrahs* to illustrate what he supposes to be the pre-*wahy* or pre-Qur'ânic deliverences of the Prophet!.

These inconsistencies are indeed conjured up to sustain the central absurdity of the story, namely, that the need for giving himself out as Prophet dawned upon Muḥammad (ﷺ) when in the course of his preaching "the more susceptible of the citizens" pointed out that they would lead a purer life if a Prophet was sent to them, like those unto the Jews and Christians. Thereupon, we are told, Muḥammad (ﷺ) reassessed his position and through a process of intense heart-searchings came to the conviction that he was divinely inspired and ultimately perceived the "vision" of the angel Jibrîl instructing him to "recite", i.e., to preach, "in the name of thy Lord". Now, imagine the position of a person who goes out to his people as a religious preacher and then, after having preached for several years and after having faced the opposition and ridicule of the bulk of his people, takes the hint in the remark of some of them that they would listen to the counsel of reform if a Prophet came to preach to them. Thereupon the preacher revises his role and reappears to his people telling them that he had now received God's commission so that they should follow him. No person with an iota of common sense and intelligence in him would render himself so ludicrous by acting so foolishly and naively. Yet, Muir not only attributes such naivety to the Prophet but also expects the readers to believe it.

This absurd story is made up by a series of twisting and mixing up of the facts on the one hand, and by misinterpreting the texts on the other. To begin with, Muir first clearly twists the well-known fact of the Prophet's bewilderment, apprehension and uncertainty consequent upon his receipt of the first revelation into a circumstance prior to that incident. He then mixes this bewilderment and uncertainty on the Prophet's part with the period of *fatrah* or pause in the coming of *waḥy*. Indeed his second twisting takes place in connection with this fact. He conveys the impression that the period of *fatrah*

is coterminous with the period during which the Prophet is alleged to have been struggling within himself and suffering from immense mental tension as to whether or not to give himself out as Prophet and speak in God's name. It may be noted that the nature of *fatrah,* as mentioned in all the reports about it, is completely different from what Muir would have us believe. Although the reports differ about its duration, they are all at one in saying that it was a period during which there was a pause in the coming of *waḥy,* not a period previous to it. The Prophet was of course anxious and restless during that period, but there is no suggestion in the sources that this restlessness was due to his mental tension about whether or not to speak in the name of God. Yet, Muir not only puts this unwarrantable interpretation on it but also assumes that during this period the Prophet was mentally so much tormented by the thought of whether or not to commit the grievous sin of speaking falsely in the name of God that he several times meditated suicide. Muir gives another twist in the facts here The report about the alleged suicide attempt is, as shown earlier, far from credible; but even taking the story as it is there is no suggestion in the sources that the cause of the alleged suicide attempt was the Prophet's mental tension about whether or not to speak falsely in God's name. The cause of his anxiety and tension was his non-receipt of *waḥy* for a period longer than the unsual intervals between such communications. Incidentally, the reports about *fatrah* and the whole affair of the Prophet's anxiety and tension on that account are conclusive evidences of the fact that *waḥy* was not something emanating from within the Prophet's own self, nor was it something of his own making.

Such twisting of the facts is blended with a series of misinterpretations of the texts, concluded by the misleading statement that the account of the steps by which Muḥammad (ﷺ) was led to assume the office of Prophet is gleaned from the "various intimations gathered from the Coran itself." It must at once be pointed out that the "steps" which Muir traces, namely, the Prophet's anxiety and bewilderment, the story of the alleged suicide attempt and the fact of *fatrah* or pause in the coming of *waḥy*, etc. are mentioned only in the reports, and not at all in the Qur'ân. And the Qur'ânic statements which Muir adduces as supportive evidence for his assumptions are mere misinterpretations by him. The first notable misuse of the Qur'ânic text on Muir's part is with regard to the statement about the sin of speaking falsely in the name of God. The Qur'ân of course denounces it as the most odious sin,

not once but at least at ten places.[1] A simple glance at these passages would make it clear that the statement is made either to rebut the unbelievers' allegation that what the Prophet was giving out to them was not really from God, or to denounce the practice of some of the People of the Book who tampered with God's revelation and gave out thier own statements as God's. Muir arbitrarily infers from this statement of the Qur'ân that the Prophet must have at an early stage of his career struggled within himself over the question of whether or not to speak falsely in God's name. There is nothing in the Qur'ân to warrant such an assumption. By making this assumption Muir in effect adopts the unbelievers' allegation and indirectly suggests that what the Prophet gave out was not really from God though he persuaded himself that it was so.

The second grave misinterpretation of Muir's is in connection with *sûrahs* 93 (*al-Ḍuḥa*) and 94 (*al-Sharḥ*) which he cites as evidence of the Prophet's alleged attempt to emancipate himself from the alleged mental tension as to whether or not to speak falsely in God's name and to reassure himself that he had indeed been favoured by God. The *sûrahs* in question of course remind the Prophet of God's favours on him; but there is nothing in them, or in the reports concerning the occasions of their revelation, to suggest that the Prophet recalled those past favours of God on him by way of emancipating himself from the mental tension as to whether or not to speak falsely in God's name or to persuade himself that what he was giving out constituted a divine mission. The explanation is solely Muir's imagination having no foundation in the Qur'ân itself, or in the reports.

The third misinterpretation is made in connection with the Qur'ânic passage 35:42 which says: "They swore their strongest oaths by God that if a warner came to them they would follow his guidance better than any of the (other) peoples..."[2] Muir assumes that this remark was made by the unbelievers to the Prophet when he was preaching to them and that because of this remark he thought of giving himself out as Prophet. There is nothing in the reports or in the Qur'ân itself to support this assumption. The utter unreasonableness of his undertaking any preaching work before being sure of his own position has already been pointed out. It may be noted here that the

1. See for instance 3:94; 6:21; 6:93; 6:144; 7:37; 10:17; 11:18; 18:15; 29:68. and 61:7. The most common form of the statement is: ﴿ومن أظلم ممن افترىٰ على الله كذبا...﴾

2. The text runs as follows: ﴿وأقسموا بالله جهد أيمـٰنهم لـئن جاءهم نذير ليكونن أهدىٰ من إحدى الأمم...﴾

statement cited was made by some leading Quraysh not to the Prophet but long before his emergence on the scene and as a reaction to the report which reached them that the Jews and Christians belied and disobeyed their Prophets.[1]

Lastly, Muir completely misunderstands or misinterprets the first *'âyah* of *sûrat al-'Alaq* when he assumes that since this *'âyah* is a command to the Prophet, "Read in the name of your Lord", previously to that he must have been preaching his doctrines *not* in the name of the Lord! Indeed, It is on a gross misinterpretation of this *'âyah* and the above noted passage 35:42 that Muir has built up his entire theory about what he calls the steps by which Muḥammad (ﷺ) came to assume the role of a divine teacher. And to sustain this theory he has assumed that the Prophet gave out as many as 18 or more *sûrahs* of the Qur'ân before he claimed to have received God's commission (Prophethood) and His communications (*waḥy*).

Whatever view one may take about the Qur'ânic passages cited by Muir, the utter absurdities and inconsistencies of the various aspects of his theory, as mentioned earlier, render it totally untenable. Nonetheless Muir's views have been taken over and adopted by his successor orientalists in some form or other. Notably, his theory of a period of "pre-wahy" or "pre-Qur'ân" deliverences by the Prophet has been reiterated by Bell, though on different grounds; while this, together with the basic premise of Muir's theory, that of gradual development of the Prophet's career and doctrines, have been taken over and pushed to an extreme by Watt who, as will be seen shortly, even suggests that the Prophet did not start with any clear concept of monotheism which came to him gradually after a prolonged period of preachings for as many as four or five years! But let us first consider the views of Margoliouth, Muir's immediate intellectual successor.

II. MARGOLIOUTH'S ASSUMPTIONS

Like Muir's, Margoliouth's treatment of the subject of *waḥy* is also an extension of the theme of ambition and design on the Prophet's part; but Margoliouth seems to have seen and avoided Muir's inconsistencies, though in the course of his treatment of the matter he has landed himself into fresh inconsistencies and absurdities. He assumes straightway that Muḥammad (ﷺ), being highly ambitious, carefully prepared himself for the role he wanted to paly; and when his plans matured fully he executed them skilfully.

1. See Al-Qurṭubî, *Tafsîr*,XIV,356; Al-Bayḍâwî, *Tafsîr*,II, 275. and Al-Shawkanî, *Tafsîr*, IV,355-356.

According to Margoliouth the whole affair of *waḥy* was "trickery" and "imposture" from first to last. It is alleged that Muḥammad (ﷺ) in accordance with his plans, acted the role of a "medium"[1] to "produce messages from the other world" and, in order to ensure his success, he so manoeuvred the "form" and "manner" of those messages that they would appear to be of "supernatural origin".[2] Thus, to produce a revelation he would "instinctively", to use Margoliouth's words, fall "into a violent agitation, his face would turn livid,[3] and he would cover himself with a blanket, from which he would emerge perspiring copiously, with a message ready."[4] This practice of covering himself with a blanket is said to have been retained by him "from first to last".[5] It is further alleged that the "epileptic fits" which the Prophet had experienced "at some time" suggested the manner which he "artificially produced", without "the slightest preparation", accompanied by "snoring and reddenning of the face."[6] This form, says Margoliouth, was "recognized as the normal form of inspiration."[7] So adept the Prophet is said to have become in the matter that he, as Margoliouth puts it, "would receive a divine communication in immediate answer to a question addressed him while he was eating, and after delivering it in this fashion, proceed to finish the morsel which he held in his hand when he was interrupted; or a revelation would come in answer to a question addressed him as he stood in the pulpit."[8]

As regards the contents of revelations Margoliouth reiterates his favourite theory that for these the Prophet "had to go back to the Jewish and Christian scriptures" until he had plenty to say.[9] It is said that he claimed it a miracle that "he was made acquainted with the contents of books which he had never read", but that subsequently he said that "the miracle lay in his unrivalled eloquence."[10] However, the "earliest scraps of revelation", says Margoliouth, are "imitations of the utterances of revivalist preachers" like Quss ibn

1. This characterization of the Prophet as "medium" has been adopted by others like Tor Andrae and Maxim Rodinson who, however, enlarges it as "megaphone".

2. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*,84.

3. Ibid., 85 (citing Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr*, XXVIII, 4).

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*,86.

6. *Ibid.* (citing *Musnad*, IV,222).

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid. (citing *Musnad,* VI,56 & III,21).

9. *Ibid.*, 80,86.

10. *Ibid.*,87.

Sâ'ida.[1] It is further alleged that the Prophet imitated the style of the ususal Arabian oratory, which was "some sort of rhyme" but "he little understood its nature."[2]

To bring home the theme of trickery and imposture Margoliouth attempts to belittle the Prophet's acknowledged integrity of character and honesty. For that purpose he draws on F. Podmore's work on spiritualism which is said to have shown that an honourable person may at the same time mystify his fellows and perform "trickery". "Mohammed", says Margoliouth, "possessed the same advantages as Podmore enumerates, and thereby won adherents..."[3] Nonetheless, continues Margoliouth, one of the Prophet's scribes was "convinced that it was imposture and discarded Islam in consequence".[4] In any case, concludes Margoliouth,"the sincerity of the medium" is of "little consequence" in studying "the political effectiveness of supernatural revelations."[5]

As regards the beginning of revelation Margoliouth says that it was the Prophet's character to bide his time till the favourable moment. Hence, like most "mediums" he made use of a "period of transition between the old life and the new."[6] Drawing an analogy with Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormon sect, who first wandered into a forest and subsequently gave out his "trance" utterances as divine message brought to his notice by angels, Margoliouth says that Muḥammad's (ﷺ) prophetic career likewise began with a period of solitude. "For one month of the year", says Margoliouth, "the Meccans practised a rite called *taḥannuth*," which was some sort of asceticism. During this month "it was Mohammed's custom to retire to a cave in Mt. Hira..." At some time in that month when he had been alone in the valley, "occurred the theophany (or its equivalent)" which led to his "starting as a divine messenger". Margoliouth says further that in the traditions relating to the matter the communication is done by Jibrîl, "the angel who in the New Testament conveys messages", but in the Qur'ân "it appears to be God Himself Who descended and at a distance of rather less than two bow-shots addressed the Prophet..." Jibrîl was substituted "afterwards", says

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ibid.*,88.
3. *Ibid.*,88-89.
4. *Ibid.*,89.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*,90.

Margoliouth, probably "due to the development of the Prophet's theology."[1]

These are in the main the views of Margoliouth regarding *waḥy* and the Prophet's assumption of the role of a religious teacher. Margoliouth clearly takes over from Muir the theme of ambition and preparation on the Prophet's part and develops it avioding Muir's inconsistencies. He also adopts the allegation of epilepsy and "trances" and attempts to fit these in his theory of "trickery" and imposture on the Prophet's part by saying that he artificailly produced the symptoms. Above all, Margoliouth stresses, equally as does Muir, that the text of the Qur'ân, or the revelations generally, are the Prophet's own composition. In all the essential respects, thus, Margoliouth does not deviate much from the lines laid down by his predecessor. He does of course add some new assumptions that will be noticed presently.

Leaving aside the allegation of ambition and preparation on the one hand, and that of epilepsy on the other, both of which have been dealt with previously, Margoliouth's main allegation is that of trickery on the Prophet's part. He suggests that the Prophet so planned the form and manner of the revelation that it might appear to be of supernatural origin. It is even said that the Prophet had taken his cue form the phenomena accompanying his alleged epileptic fits earlier in his life and that he reproduced those phenomena, such as falling into trance, snoring and reddenning of face, perspiring, or covering himself with a blanket, etc. It is further said that this "came to be recognized as the normal form of inspiration." But the instances cited by Margoliouth himself show not a uniform but various manners of the coming of revelations to the Prophet. Most of these manners obviously do not fit in with the theory of trickery. Thus, (a) with regard to the beginning of revelation, which should have been considered the most important and decisive instance to substantiate the theory, Margoliouth admits that the Prophet received it all alone in the "valley" where there was none else to witness the from and manner of its coming. Also, neither does Margoliouth allege, nor do the sources indicate, that there was any such symptom on that occasion as falling into a trance etc. (b) Margoliouth also cites the instances of the Prophet's receiving revelations while taking his meals or while standing on the pulpit. In these cases also the reports cited do not really suggest that the Prophet affected any such symptoms as snoring, reddenning of the face, falling into a trance, etc.[2]

1. *Ibid.*,90-91.

2. See *Musnad*,III,21 and VI,56 (reports respectively of ‘A’ishah (r.a.) and ’Abû Sa‘îd al-Khudrî, r.a.).

Moreover, these instances do not relate to the coming of Qur'ânic *waḥy* which is to be always distinguished from the other types of *waḥy* which the Prophet received from time to time. (c) Margoliouth also alleges that the Prophet let his "confederates act the part of Gobriel or let his followers identify some interlocutors of his with that angel."[1] The allegation is totally unjustified; but the allusion is clearly to the instances mentioned in the sources of Jibrîl's sometimes appearing in the form of a human being (sometimes as a stranger, sometimes in the appearance of a companion of the Prophet named Dâḥyah al-Kalbî) and delivering the revelation to him. In any case this "form", far from convincing the on-lookers about the supernatural origin of the text, was the more likely to expose the alleged trickery; for the individual who thus allegedly impersonated the angel was not to be let alone by the people who were generally in attendance upon the Prophet for most of the time. In all these cases there was no question of the Prophet's artificially reproducing the phenomena of epilepsy alleged to be the "normal manner of inspiration." Thus the insatnces cited by Margoliouth himself do not at all substantiate the allegation of trickery on the Prophet's part.

Secondly, Margoliouth is also inconsistent in his assumption about the Prophet's solitary prayer and stay (*taḥannuth*) at the cave of Ḥirâ'. Margoliouth suggests that like most "mediums" the Prophet planned it as a period of transition between the old life and the new. In the same breath, hoevever, it is stated that the Makkans practised this rite during the month of Ramaḍân each year and that it was "Mohammed's custom to retire to a cave in Mt. Ḥira" during that month. Now, the report about the Makkans' practising *taḥannuth* during Ramaḍân has been considered before;[2] but leaving aside that question, it is clearly inconsistent to suggest, as Margoliouth does, that the period of *taḥannuth* was a planned period of transition from the old life to the new, and then to say in the same breath that in doing *taḥannuth* at Ḥirâ' the Prophet was following a religious rite practised each year by the Makkans. The fact is that here Margoliouth has been trapped by another incorrect assumption on his part, namely, that the Prophet, prior to his call, followed the religion of the pagan Makkans including the worship of their gods and goddesses.[3] Margoliouth is so enamoured of this faulty assumption

1. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*,88 (citing Ibn Sa'd, II,520).
2. *Supra*, pp. 376, 379-380.
3. *Supra*, pp.195-203.

of his that he unguardedly introduces it here without caring to see that it is totally inconsistent with his theory of planned period of transition used by the Prophet. That Margoliouth labours here under his above mentioned assumption is clear from the fact that he adds : "He [the Prophet] would appear to have taken his family with him: yet probably their daily worship of Al-Lât or Al-'Uzzâ would not be carried on at such a time."[1] It must once again be stressed that the Prophet and his wife never performed the so-called daily worship of Al-Lât and Al- 'Uzzâ and, as shown earlier,[2] Margoliouth's statement in this respect is based on a gross mistake in understanding the *ḥadîth* in question. Here, however, he in effect contradicts one faulty assumption of his with another.

Similar inconsistency pervades Margoliouth's assumption regarding the language and contents of the revelation. Thus he says that the Prophet claimed his "unrivalled eloquence" to be a miracle[3] and then, a little further on, states that he merely imitated the "sort of rhyme" of the general Arabian oratory, "though he little understood it."[4] Again, with regard to the contents of the revelation Margoliouth observes that for them the Prophet "had to go back to Jewsih and Christian scriptures, until the course of events provided him with plenty to say."[5] Elaborating this assumption Margoliouth says further: "Once the head of the state Mohammed had plenty to say: but at the commencement of his career, the matter was not provided by the circumstances". Hence "he hit on the plan of borrowing from the Old or New Testament."[6]

The allegation of borrowing from the Jewish and Christian sources has been dealt with in a previous chapter.[7] Here it may be noted that Margoliouth practically nullifies his statement here by another gross inconsistency. Thus, having made the above mentioned remark he immediately carries out a *volte face* and says that the Prophet "followed this safe method" of borrowing from Judaeo-Christian scriptures when he was forced by circumstances to

1. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*,91. Margoliouth here again cites *Musnad*, IV,222.
2. *Supra*, pp.195-203.
3. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, 87.
4. *Ibid.*, 88.
5. *Ibid.*, 80.
6. *Ibid.*, 86.
7. *Supra*, Chap. XI.

produce revelations in increasing quantities, but "the earliest scraps of revelation... appear to have been imitations of the utterances of revivalist preachers" like Quss ibn Sâ'ida.[1] Thus in one breath Margoliouth would have us believe that at the initial stage when the Prophet had not much to say he would borrow from the Judaeo-Christian scriptures until the progress of circumstances provided him with enough to say, and then, again, we are required to believe that the Prophet would adopt "this safe" method when the progress of circumstances made it necessary for him to produce revelations in increasing quantities! The inconsistency seems to have been due to an awareness on Margoliouth's part that the so-called "earliest scraps" of revelation" do not really bear any semblance with the Old and New Testament materials and that those parts of the Qur'ân that seem to resemble them in any way are not quite the initial revelations to the Prophet. As regards the anecdote about Quss and the Prophet's having allegedly heard him speak at 'Ukâẓ it is, as mentioned earlier,[2] far from being trustworthy. But even taking the report as it is, his reported utterances have but very faint resemblance with the early *sûrahs*. Nor would those utterances make up a fraction of the materials contained in the early revelations.

Such inconsistencies are blended with a good deal of twisting of the facts. Thus the instances mentioned in the sources of the Prophet's having sometimes experienced some physical hardships while receiving revelations have been twisted as symptoms of epilepsy; though anyone having an idea of the disease and its physical and mental effects on its victim would at once recognize that the Prophet's case was quite different from that ailment. A second twist with regard to the same fact is the assumption that the Prophet artificially produced those symptoms, though there is nothing in the sources to indicate that he had recourse to such trickery. Nor did the many followers and companions who closely surrounded him for over a score of years ever think such to be the case. And a third twist in the same fact is the assertion that such allegedly artificially produced symptoms were the "normal" form of inspiration; though it is quite clear from the sources that the instances of physical hardships accompanying the receipt of revelations were only exceptional and very few and far between.

Similarly the fact of the angel Jibrîl's sometimes appearing in the form of

1. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*,87.
2. *Supra*, pp. 240-241.

a human being has been twisted as the Prophet's letting "confederates act the part of Gabriel". As already mentioned, such a trickery was the more likely to expose the trick than to impress the divine nature of the revelation upon the audience present on such occasions. This particular twisting is all the more strange on Margoliouth's part; for he notes at the same time that Jibrîl is the angel "who in the New Testament conveys messages."[1] One could be tempted to ask: If it was nothing unnatural for Jibrîl to be the conveyer of messages in the case of the New Testament Prophets, why should it be so in the case of another Prophet. To prove trickery in the latter's case it is necessary to point out the true manners in which the angel used to convey messages to the New Testament Prophets. Neither Margoliouth nor any of his intellectual disciples who adopt his views have, however, done it.

The twisting of facts is geneally done through misinterpretation of the texts. Indeed it is often difficult to draw a line of distinction between the two. Such at least is the case of a writer of revelations who, it is alleged, abjured Islam because he was convinced that the affair of revelation was a fake.[2] The tradition cited by Margoliouth in fact records the despicable end of a person who used to write down revelations for the Prophet but who abjured Islam, joined the Makkan opposition and gave out as reason for his abandoning Islam that the Prophet used to dictate some expressions to him but he would write something else instead, and when asked to correct the mistake he would insist on not changing what he had written. So, he says, the Prophet would permit him to write whatever he liked to write. It is made to appear that this happened more than once.[3]

Now, clearly this statement is that of a person who had turned hostile. On the face of it it is thus not at all worthy of credence. Form the text of the report it is also clear that the person in question was an enemy in disguise who, by a fake prefession of Islam, had infiltrated the ranks of the Muslims with the object of subverting Islam and the text of the revelations. In any case, common sense and reason would never accept as true what is given out by the person; for no reasonable individual, especially one who is supposed to be a shrewd and calculated impostor, would ever allow any of his clerks or followers to write whatever he liked to, and would then allow that text to be

1. Masrgoliouth, *op. cit.*,91.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Musnad*, III,120-121.

given out as revelation. The report clearly indicates it to be a false allegation and describes the evil consequences that befell the calumniator. Margoliouth twists this false allegation as evidence of the fakeness of the revelation. Moreover, there is no reference in the report itself to the Prophet's ever artificially reproducing the "symptoms" which Margoliouth cites as marks of the alleged trickery. Strangely enough, he finds no inference to be drawn from the instance of thousands of intelligent and sensible persons who followed the Prophet with rare devotion and dedication throughout their lives except that they were all mere dupes to his trickery and imposture!

III. MARGOLIOUTH'S MISINTERPRETATION OF 53:4-10 (*SÛRAT AL-NAJM*)

The most glaring of his misinterpretations is Margoliouth's statement, and this is his most notable addition to Muir's assumptions, that from the Qur'ân it appears to be God Who Himself and "at a distance of rather less than two bowshots" delivered the revelation to the Prophet and that Jibrîl was substituted afterwards as the conveyer of revelations. Though Margoliouth does not specifically cite it, the allusion is clearly to the Qur'ânic passage 53:4-10 (*sûrat al-Najm*). Before taking this passage into account it may be pointed out that this assumption of Margoliouth's too is somewhat inconsistent with his general thesis. He labours all through to show that the Prophet only imitated the previous Prophets, that he derived his ideas and information from the Old and the New Testament, that his case was like that of Joseph Smith who unearthed the Book of Mormon "under the guidance of the angels" and that in the New Testament it is the angel Jibrîl who conveyed God's messages to His Prophets. Having said all these Margoliouth suggests, allegedly on the authority of the Qur'ân, that the Prophet initailly claimed to have received the revelation directly from God. It is not explained why Muḥammad (ﷺ) should have made such an unusual departure from the practice of all the other Prophets who received revelations through the angel and whom he is said to have merely imitated, and whether such a direct transaction with God, unseen and unobserved by anyone else, and keeping the angel completely out of the scene for a long time, would be the most appropriate method, as Margoliouth would have us believe the Prophet was careful to adopt, to impress the supernatural origin of his message upon his audience.

But let us consider the Qur'ânic passage on the basis of which Margoliouth advances his assumption. The entire passage 53:2-10 runs as follows:

﴿ما ضل صاحبكم وما غوىٰ (٢) وما ينطق عن الهوىٰ (٣) إن هو إلا وحي يوحىٰ (٤) علمه شديد القوىٰ (٥) ذو مرة فاستوىٰ (٦) وهو بالأفق الأعلىٰ (٧) ثم دنا فتدلىٰ (٨) فكان قاب قوسين أو أدنىٰ (٩) فأوحىٰ إلى عبده ما أوحىٰ (١٠)﴾ (٥٣: ٢-١٠)

"(2) Your companion (i.e. the Prophet) has not gone astray nor has he acted foolishly. (3) Nor does he speak out of (his) whims. (4) It is nothing but *wahy* (communication) communicated (to him). (5) One very powerful taught him. (6) He possesses physical and mental robustness, and he positioned himself (7) while he was in the highest horizon. (8) Then he approached and came closer; (9) and was at a distance of two bow-lengths or even closer. (10) Thus did he communicate to His servant what He communicated." (53:2-10).

This passage has to be understood in the context of the situation in which it was revealed and also with reference to another Qur'ânic passage, 81: 19-28 (*sûrat al-Takwîr*) which deals with the same matter. According to Muslim classical scholars as well as many orientalists this latter passage is earlier in the order of revelation than 53:2-10.[1] Both the passages were revealed, however, in the context of the unblelievers' refusal to believe that the Prophet had received any revelation from God, alleging that he had been under the influence of an evil spirit or that he had gone off his head. Both the passges are rebuttals of that allegation. The passage 81:19-27 runs as follows:

﴿إنه لقول رسول كريم (١٩) ذى قوة عند ذى العرش مكين (٢٠) مطاع ثَمَّ أمين (٢١) وما صاحبكم بمجنون (٢٢) ولقد رءاه بالأفق المبين (٢٣) وما هو على الغيب بضنين (٢٤) وما هو بقول شيطـٰن رجيم (٢٥) فأين تذهبون (٢٦) إن هو إلا ذكر للعـٰلمين (٢٧)﴾ (٨١: ١٩-٢٧)

"(19) Verily this is a text (saying قول) delivered by an honourable messenger; (20) possessing power and with rank near the Lord of the Throne. (21) Obeyed there and trusted. (22) And your companion (i.e., the Prophet) is not one possessed. (23) Surelly he saw him (the honourable messenger) in the clear horizon. (24) Nor does he withhold a knowledege of the unseen. (25) Nor is it (the revelation) the word of a devil, accursed. (26) Then whither do you go? (27) It is nothing but a recital to all the worlds." (81:19-27).

The points common to both the passages may be noted. In the first place, both describe the Prophet's seeing an entity in the horizon. In 81:23, which is the earlier in the order of revelation, this entity is clearly described as "an honourable messenger", i.e., a messenger of God, an angel, and not God

1. According to the Muslim scholars *sûrahs al-Takwîr* and *al-Najm* were respectively the 7th and the 23rd in the order of revelation. Rodwell, Jeffery, Muir and Nöldeke hold them to be, respectively, 32nd and 46th, 24th and 27th, 27th and 43rd and 27th and 28th in the order of revelation.

Himself. Secondly, though the passage 53:2-10 does not specifically mention that the entity was a "messenger", his description there is very much similar to that in 81:19-27. Thus while in the latter passage he is described as one possessing power ﴿ذى قوة﴾ and position near the Lord of the Throne, in 53:2-10 he is described as "very powerful" ﴿شديد القوىٰ﴾ and possessing physical and mental robustness ﴿ذو مرّة﴾. Thirdly, both the passages rebut the allagations of the Makkan unbelievers and both speak of the Prophet as "your companion" (صاحبكم) because he was really one of them and was thoroughly known to them. Fourthly, both the passages emphasize that the Prophet was not "one possessed" (81:22) nor had he strayed from the right path and acted foolishly (53:2). Fifthly, both passages say that what the Prophet was giving out was a statement (قول) given to him by an honourable messenger (81:19) and taught him by "one very powerful" (53:5). Finally, both the passages reiterate that it was a revelation given to the Prophet (53:4), not the word of an evil spirit but a recital to all the worlds (81:25, 27). The two passges thus speak of the same subject, give the same reply to the same objections of the Makkan unbelievers and describe the entity seen in the horizon in similar phrases and adjectives. Each of the passages is thus explanatory of and complementary to the other. And since the earlier passage (81:19-27) specifically refers to the entity as God's messenger, it cannot be assumed that the later passage, 53:2-10, claimed it to be God Himself Who had descended to deliver the text to the Prophet. The same is true even if the order of revelation of the two passages is reversed. For, if the Prophet had been so inconsistent as to speak of the conveyer of the text as God in one piece of revelation and as the angel in another piece, he would have been very badly harassed by the unbelievers and his case would have been irretrievably damaged.

Even if the passage 53:2-10 is considered independently without any reference to 81:19-27 it cannot be assumed that the reference is to God.; for the passage contains decisive internal evidence to the contrary. Thus the entity is described there as possessing great strength ﴿شديد القوىٰ﴾. Now, God is of course the Almighty and the Most Powerful, but he is nowhere described in the Qur'ân as *Shadîd al-Quwa* or "very powerful". The phrase is clearly indicative of relative strength, not of superlative power. It cannot therefore be a description of God. Similarly, the expression *dhu mirrah* ﴿ذو مرّة﴾, signifying mental and intellectual quality or physical quality or both, is applicable only to a created being, and not to the Creator. Also, it is nowhere

mentioned in the Qur'ân as a description or attribute of God. Thirdly, a little further on in the same *sûrah* it is mentioned that the Prophet had a second glance of the same entity and then it is emphasized that what he saw was of the greatest signs of his Lord ﴿من ءايـٰت ربه الكبرىٰ﴾.[1] Hence what the Prophet had seen on both the occasions was a sign, i.e., a wonderful creation of his Lord — the angel Jibrîl in his real shape and form — and not the Lord Himself.

Margoliouth's confusion may have been caused by the statement at 53:10- ﴿فأوحىٰ إلى عبده ما أوحىٰ﴾. To understand the meaning of this expression it is necessary to bear in mind three important things. In the first place, the letter *fa* (ف) with which the statement starts, has two senses - *istiqbâliyyah*, i.e., sequential, meaning "then"; and *tafsîriyyah*, i.e., explanatory, meaning "thus" or "so". The second thing to note is the expression *'abdihi* (عبده) in the statement. It definitely means His, i.e., God's servant and may therefore be taken to refer either to the Prophet or to the angel Jibrîl. And thirdly, it is essential to remember that in Arabic a pronoun, whether explicit or inherent in a verb, does not always relate to the immediate antecedent, as in English, but may relate to a nominative or subject understood from the context. Bearing these three things in mind, the meaning of the *'âyah* 53:10 may be understood. If the letter *fa* with which it starts is taken in its sequential sense, the meaning of the statement would be: Then he (the angel) communicated to His servant (i.e. Prophet) what He (or he) communicated". If, on the other hand, the letter *fa* is taken in its explanatory sense, then the meaning would be: Thus or So (by means of the angel) He (the Lord) did communicate to His servant what He communicated". It would be manifestly worng to disregard the internal evidences mentioned above, and also the context and the relation of the passage to the other passage, 81:19-27, and then, by fixing the eye on the expression *'abdihi* (عبده) to assume that the passage speaks of God Himself appearing in the horizon and then descending to the Prophet to deliver to him the text of revelation!

Margoliouth's assumption that the Prophet had initially claimed that God Himself had delivered to him the text is thus totally untenable. Despite its untenability, however, his assumption has been taken over and reiterated by his successors. Consequently they have also reiterated Margoliouth's other suggestion that Jibrîl was substituted as conveyer of revelation at a sub-

1. Q. 53:13,18.

sequent stage. Margoliouth's main thesis that Muḥammad (ﷺ) calculatedly and designingly acted the part of a Prophet and was otherwise an imposter is no new thing. It is essentially a repetition of the Medievel European approach to Islam and its Prophet. Recent European scholarship is of course shy of making such a blatant accusation against the Prophet; but when a recent scholar, as would be seen presently, speaks of the Prophet's "inducing" the symptoms of revelation,[1] it is in effect an echo of that medieval approach. In another respect Margoliouth appears to have indicated a new line of approach, that of having recourse to modern works on theosophy, philosophy or mysticism to explain the phenomenon of Islamic revelation. Thus while he uses the work of Podmore on spiritualism to suggest that the Prophet, though known to be honest, could nevertheless play trickery and be mystifying, 'Watt, as will be seen presently, has recourse to the work of A. Poulain on mysticism to suggest that *waḥy* was a sort of "intellectual locution" on the part of Muḥammad (ﷺ).[2]

1. *Infra*, Ch.XX, sec.II.
2. *Infra*, chapter. XX, secs. I & II.

CHAPTER XVIII

WAḤY AND THE ORIENTALISTS: II. BELL'S VIEWS

Before discussing Watt's treatment of the subject it is necessary to take into account Richard Bell's views about it; for, though Margoliouth bases his main assumption upon the Qur'ânic passage 53:2-10, it is Bell who devotes a good deal of attention to it and brings new arguments to bear on it; and because Watt, though advancing some new arguments, rests his conclusions essentially on Bell's assumptions. Bell is thus a link between Margoliouth and Watt.

Bell put forth his views mainly in a series of two articles pubished in two consecutive issues of *The Moslem World* for 1934.[1] In them he advanced the following suggestions:

(a) That the traditions regarding the coming of *waḥy* are inventions of a later age and are founded upon the Qur'ânic passage 53:1-18.

(b) That before he "recounted" the "visions" in the above mentioned passage the Prophet had been "speaking" in some manner but had not started delivering or composing the Qur'ân.

(c) That the term *waḥy* does not mean verbal communication of the text of the Qur'ân but "suggestion", "prompting" or "inspiration" to "compose" the Qur'ân.

(d) That according to the passage 53:1-18 the Prophet claimed to have seen Allah, but as he became better informed and also met with objections he mystified and introduced modifying verses in it giving the impression of a "spiritual vision".

(e) That as he subsequently became aware of the existence of angels he reasserted in *sûrah* 81 (*al-Takwîr*) that he had seen the angel messenger on the clear horizon; and

(f) That still more subsequently, at Madina, he introduced Jibrîl as the conveyer of *waḥy*.

It is to be noted that of these suggestions only two, those at (a) and (c),

1. Richard Bell, "Mohammed's call", *The Moslem World*, January, 1934, pp. 13-19 and "Mohammed's Visions", *ibid.*, April, 19-34, pp. 145-154. The term "Moslem" has subsequently been modified into "Muslim" in the title of the journal.

namely that the traditions regarding the coming of *waḥy* are later inventions and that *waḥy* means "suggestions" or "prompting", not verbal communication of a text, may be said to be Bell's own, though they are implicit in others' assumptions as well. These are made, however, to elaborate the other four suggestions that are originally Muir's and Margoliouth's. Thus the suggestion at (b), namely, that the Prophet had been "speaking" in some manner before delivering the Qur'ân is a reiteration of what Muir says about the Prophet's pre-*waḥy* or pre-Qur'ân deliverences.[1] Similarly the suggestions at (d), (e) and (f) are an elaboration of Margoliouth's assumptions that the Prophet initially calimed to have seen God and that the angel Jibrîl was introduced subsequently as the conveyer of revelations.[2] Let us now consider the suggestions one by one.

I. CONCERNING THE TRADITIONS ABOUT THE COMING OF *WAḤY*

Bell's objections to the traditions concerning the coming of *waḥy* proceed from and ultimately rest on the other assumptions that the Qur'ânic passage 53:1-18 shows that the Prophet at first claimed to have seen Allah and that further it contains subsequent modifications of that claim. Both the assumptions are, as already seen and as will be further clear presently, far from correct. But apart from that, Bell's reasons for discounting the traditions about the coming of *waḥy* are: (i) He says that 'Â'ishah (r.a.), the original authority for the traditions, "was not born at the time of the Call, and could at best have got the story" from the Prophet himself. Moreover, much has subsequently "been attributed to her which she probably never said."[3] (ii) The story as it has come down to us "in the earliest form" in Ibn Isḥâq's / Ibn Hishâm's work makes 'Â'ishah (r.a.) responsible only for "the first part of it, viz., that the Messenger of Allah began by seeing true visions in sleep; that they came to him like the dawn of the morning, and that he began to love solitude. The rest of the story is given on quite a different, and far less reliable *isnâd*."[4] (iii) The statement that *taḥannuth* (the solitary stay and prayer at Ḥirâ') was a pre-Islamic Quraysh practice, as mentioned in Ibn Isḥâq's work, is not correct. The "ascetic note in such a practice was entirely alien to Mohammed's nature" and the "accompanying fasts" have no support in the

1. See *supra*, pp.402-404.
2. See *supra*, pp. 418-422.
3. *The Moslem World*, January, 1934, p.14.
4. *Ibid.*

Qur'ân. "Fasting was not introduced till the Madinan period, and then as an imitation of Jewish practice."[1] (iv) The expression *Nâmûs*, derived from the Greek term *nomos* and meaning Jewish law, could not have been used by Waraqah ibn Nawfal in his reported conversation with the Prophet; for the Qur'ân does not contain the expression and, according to Bell, as the Prophet was fond of "borrowing religious technical terms it was to be expected that, if he had known this word he would have used it, especially if Waraqah had used it at such a momentous point in his life." Hence the "whole story is the invention of a later age."[2]

Clearly this last agrument (iv) calls for a substantiation of three other hypotheses before it could be adduced as a valid argument. These hypotheses are (a) that the Prophet himself composed the Qur'ân; (b) that he was fond of borrowing foreign religious technical terms and (c) that all unfamiliar terms (*gharâ'ib*) occurring in the *ḥadîth* literature should invariably be found in the Qur'ân. Needless to say that none of these hypetheses is an established and accepted fact. Particularly the crux of the whole argumentation, that the Prophet himself composed the Qur'ân, is the very point at issue and it should not therefore be first assumed as a fact and then that should not be made a point to prove that very fact. Bell here seems to have merely depended upon A. Jeffery's suggestion.[3] In fact this very argument about *Nâmûs* rebounds on Bell himself and destroys his thesis that the particular traditions about the coming of *waḥy* to the Prophet are inventions of a later age. For if, as Bell says, the word *Nâmûs* is of Greek origin meaning Jewish law and if the Prophet (or any one else) had fabricated the story when the alleged initial claim of the Prophet's having seen Allah had been allegedly modified and consequently the angel had been introduced as the conveyer of *waḥy*, he would definitely have used the term angel or Jibrîl in the story instead of the admittedly unfamiliar and, according to the meaning suggested, rather incongruous expression *Nâmûs* in it. Thus according to Bell's own reasoning the word *Nâmûs*, since it is used in the tradition, could not, even if Greek in origin, have meant Jewish law (and it is well to remember that words of foreign origin change meanings in the process of adoption and naturalization in another language) and that its very use in the tradition in question as an

1. *Ibid.*,16.
2. *Ibid.*
3. A. Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ân*, Baroda, 1938. Bell must have seen the work before its publication.

expression of Waraqah's, not of the Prophet's nor of 'Â'ishah's, is evidence of the genuineness of the account.

As regards Bell's argument at (i) it is of course true that 'Â'ishah (r.a.) received the account from the Prophet himself. It is also likely that something might have been subsequently given out in her name which she probably never said. But this probability only calls for a more careful examination of the *isnâd* rather than for treating all traditions emanating from her as suspect. Bell seeks to discredit the whole story on the ground that *taḥannuth* was not a pre-Islamic Quraysh practice as given out in the version of the report in Ibn Isḥâq's work, nor was fasting, which is said to have accompanied it, introduced till at Madina. Now, without discussing whether fasting was not known in pre-Islamic Arabia or whether it was introduced in imitation of the Jews, it may be pointed out that 'Â'ishah's (r.a.) report about *taḥannuth*, as given in *Bukhârî*, does neither mention that it was a pre-Islamic Quraysh practice nor does it make any allusion to fasting being a necessary part of it. It is also to be noted that the reporters in Ibn Isḥâq's work do not claim to have received their account from her. Thus Bell's argument here suffers from a dual methodological fault. He seeks to discredit her account in general on the basis of statements that are nowhere claimed to have been made by her and also on the basis of an account which he himself acknowledges to have come down on a "far less reliable *isnâd*."

Again, Bell seems to admit the genuineness of the very first part of 'Â'ishah's (r.a.) report as reproduced in Ibn Isḥâq's work because, according to Bell, it is found here "in the earliest form". It says, as Bell puts it, "that the Messenger of Allah began by seeing true visions in his sleep; that they came to him like the dawn of the morning, and that he began to love solitude."[1] Bell emphasizes that this earliest version does not make her responsible for anything more than that. It is to be noted that Bell is not quite correct in translating the expression *al-ru'yâ al-ṣâdiqa* (الرؤيا الصادقة) here as "true visions". Its correct meaning is "true dreams", for *ru'yâ* in sleep means dreams, not visions. Bell is also not quite right in translating the expression (جاءته مثل فلق الصباح) as "they came to him like the dawn of the morning". Its correct sense is "they came true as the dawn of the morning". Be that as it may, two points need to be specially noted about this statement. First, it is obviously part of the story, not the whole of it; for 'Â'ishah (r.a.) could not

1. *M.W.*, 1934, p.14.

have stopped abruptly without indicating what the Prophet did or what happened to him after he began to love solitude. She must have said something in continuation and completion of the story. Second, whatever the nature of the *ru'yâ* in sleep, there is no hint here at the appearance of any entity before the Prophet at that stage. Nor does Bell seem to take what he translates as "visions" to be the ones which he assumes are "recounted" in the Qur'ânic passage 53:1-18. For, if it was the question of only a "vision" in sleep, i.e. a dream, no one would have bothered to controvert or discredit it, for anyone can experience any sort of unusual dreams in sleep. Clearly the "vision" which is supposed to have caused the controversy leading to the alleged clarification in the passage 53:1-18 must have been different from the dreams ("visions") in sleep and it must have taken place before its "recounting" in the above mentioned passage. The question that naturally arises is: How and when did the Prophet have that experience which he gave out to the people and which elicited criticisms, thereby making it necessary for him to "recount" and clarify it in the passage in question. Bell does not of course ask himself this question; but the part of 'Â'ishah's (r.a.) report quoted in Ibn Isḥâq's work and Bell's own theory both indicate that something remains to be said in completion of the story. That something is in fact related in 'Â'ishah's (r.a.) report which is given in full and correctly in *Bukhârî*; but it is given in Ibn Isḥâq's work in a different and less reliable form, by a different group of narrators who have at least the honesty of not citing 'Â'ishah (r.a.) as the authority for their version of the account.

While rejecting the story about *taḥannuth* and the Prophet's conversation with Waraqah, Bell does not elsewhere rule out the possibility of the Prophet's contact with the latter and such other people with a knowledge of Christianity and its scripture. Indeed such contacts are implicit throughout Bell's other thesis, *The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment.*[1] Be that as it may, even in the present instance he implies that the Prophet had given out his initial experience at the outset of his career; for, if he had not, there would have been no need for "recounting" it. Therefore the question arises: to whom could the Prophet have first disclosed his experience, if not to such persons as his wife Khadîjah (r.a.) and their relative Waraqah who, by all accounts, were the most likely ones to listen to him with sympathy and attention? *Taḥannuth*, the experience at Ḥirâ' and the subsequent conversation

1. London, 1926.

with Waraqah, which are the two most imporatnat items in 'Â'ishah's (r.a.) report, thus appear to be just in the nature of things and are moreover in accord with Bell's own lines of argument.

II. THE ASSUMPTION OF PRE-QUR'ÂN DELIVERENCES

As regards the second assumption that prior to his recounting the "visions" in the passage 53:1-18 the Prophet had been "speaking" in "some manner" but had not started delivering or "composing" the Qur'ân, Bell's arguments are as follows: (i) The word *yanṭiqu* in the passage (*'âyah* 3) "is a general one and is not elsewhere associated with the recitation of the Qur'ân." (ii) The word 'Qur'ân' is derived from the syriac *qeryânâ.* Hence the idea of supplying a Qur'ân "was suggested by the scripture readings of the Christian church." Therefore the Prophet "had gathered some sort of a congregation before he set about supplying them with 'readings'." (iii) The word *'awḥâ* used in *'âyah* 4 of the passage does not "necessarily imply the communication of the words of the Qur'ân."[1] Also, the various uses of the word *waḥy* in the Qur'ân show that it means "suggestion", "prompting" or "inspiration."[2]

Now, the last argument (iii) relates mainly to the third of Bell's assumptions enumerated above, namely, the nature of *waḥy* in the Qur'ân. Hence this argument will be dealt with in the next section. As regards Bell's first argument (i), namely, that initially the Prophet had been only "speaking" in some manner and not delivering the Qur'ân and that he commenced delivering the Qur'ân only when he had gathered a sort of congregation, it is simply a reiteration of Muir's assumption noticed earlier. The faults in that assumption have already been noted.[3] So far as Bell's own reasonings in this connection are concerned, it may be noted that he puts a very narrow and rather misleading construction on the expression *yanṭ iqu* occurring in 53:3, divorcing the word from the whole context of the passage and the situation in which it was given out. The unmistakable purport of the passage is to contradict the unbelievers' objection to the effect that what the Prophet had been giving out to them was not God's words but the Prophet's own. In reply it is stated that the Prophet "does not speak out of his own whim; it is nothing but

1. *The Moslem World*, 1934, p.146.
2. *Ibid.*,147,148.
3. *Supra*,pp. 402-410.

a divine communication (*waḥy*) delivered (to him)." The expression is *mâ yanṭiqu* (does not speak), not simply *yanṭiqu* (he speaks). It is thus just the appropriate phrase in the context. It is not used simply in the general sense of "speaking", as Bell would have us believe, and it does not imply that the Prophet had been "only speaking in some manner". It implies that the Prophet had been claiming his deliverences to be God's communications, that the unbelievers were objecting to that claim and that the passage therefore rebuts that objection by categorically asserting that the Prophet did not speak out of his own mind — it was no statement of his own born out of his whims, but a *waḥy* (divine communication) communicated (to him). Bell totally misconstrues the expression divorcing it from the context of the passage. If the Prophet had not claimed that what he was giving out was God's words —Qur'ân— there would have been no reason for the unbelievers' objection and therefore no need for a rejoinder to that objection, as the passage in question incontrovertibly is.

Bell is also somewhat confusing and self-contradictory in his statements in this connection. He says in connection with the supposedly pre-Qur'ân deliverences that *waḥy* "does not mean the verbal communication of the text of a revelation, but it means 'suggestion', 'prompting' or 'inspiration' coming into a person's mind from outside himself."[1] He further says that the Prophet had, before the delivery of the passage in question, been only speaking "by *waḥy*, by suggestion from a heavenly person" whom he had seen.[2] Obviously Bell makes these statements to avoid the implication of the assertion in the passage that what the Prophet was giving out was not his speech but *waḥy* delivered to him. Bell is thus forced to give an interpretation of the expression *waḥy* in relation to what he calls pre-Qur'ân deliverences. But this interpretation of Bell's in effect eliminates the distinction between what is called the pre-Qur'ân deliverences and the deliverences constituting the Qur'ân. Bell is thus both confusing and self-contradictory. He himself nullifies his assumption of pre-Qur'ân deliverences by the Prophet.

As regards Bell's other assumption that the Prophet got the idea of delivering a Qur'ân (reading) from the scripture readings in the Christian church and that he thought of producing such "readings" only when he had already gathered a sort of a congregation round him, it is simply an absurd proposi-

1. *The Moslem World*, 1934, p.148.
2. *Ibid.*

tion inspired obviously by the similarly absurd assumption of Muir's that by his pre-*waḥy* or pre-Qur'ân utterances the Prophet had already gathered a band of followers when he thought of standing forth as a Prophet and speaking in the name of God.[1] And the same objections apply in Bell's case as well. For, it is simply unreasonable to think that any group of persons would become the Prophet's followers unless they were convinced of the truth of his position as a divinely commissioned teacher and of his utterances in relation to his teachings as divine communications. Moreover, if the Prophet got the idea of congregational "readings" from the scripture readings in the Christian church, it does not necessarily follow that he waited till he gathered a band round him. Intelligent and careful as he was by all accounts, he would have started his mission by having a set of readings ready at hand!

Lastly, Bell's statement that prior to his "recounting" of the "vision" in the passage 53:1-18 the Prophet had been only speaking in some manner implies that the passage 53:1-18 is the earliest part of the Qur'ân to be revealed. That proposition, however, is simply wrong. It is neither supported by the sources, in spite of the differences in the reports regarding the order of revelations, nor is it admitted by the orientalists themselves. Even Bell does not appear to strictly hold that view; and he in effect contradicts himself a little earlier when he says: "If Mohammed was commissioned to produce a Koran (recitation), then the command *'iqra'* (recite) would naturally come first. That argument may even now appeal to a critical mind, and indeed most European scholars have accepted the passage as the earliest."[2] Thus does Bell in effect say that before the delivery of the passage 53:1-18 the *'iqra'* passage of the Qur'ân had been revealed. Muḥammad (ﷺ) had thus not just been speaking in some manner, but delivering the Qur'ân, before the so-called "recounting" of the "vision" in 53:1-18.

III. BELL'S CONCEPT OF *WAḤY*

This brings us to the third in the series of Bell's assumptions, namely, his view of the nature and implications of *waḥy*. He points out some of the various senses in which the term *waḥy* and its derivatives are used in the Qur'ân and on that basis asserts that the general meaning of the word is "suggestion", "prompting" or "inspiration". He then cites some of the instances of *waḥy* where God gave directives to His Prophets to do some particular

1. See *supra*, pp. 402-406.
2. *The Moslem World*, 1934, p.17.

things, such as to Nûḥ to build the ark, to Mûsâ to set out with his people by night and to strike the rock with his staff and to Muḥammad (ﷺ) to follow the religion of Ibrâhîm. On the basis of such instances of God's *waḥy* to His Prophets Bell concludes that *waḥy* means suggestions or prompting "for a practical line of conduct."[1]

Now, before taking up the meaning of *waḥy* in general and that of Qur'ânic *waḥy* in particular, some general faults in Bell's analysis may be pointed out. To begin with, when he argues that *waḥy* means suggestions for a practical line of conduct, Bell does not go the whole way and does not explain how the suggestion or prompting, as he prefers to call it, could have been communicated to the Prophet. Also, if he had not been too inclined to use the terms "suggestions" and "prompting" he would have easily seen that the instances he cites are clearly God's "commands" and directives to His Prophets, and not merely suggestions. These commands and directives for the practical conduct, it may be pointed out, constitute God's words. The command *'iqra'*, which Bell admits to be the earliest passage of the Qur'ân, is God's word.

Bell seems to acknowledge this fact when he says that the "practical suggestions are indeed often formulated in direct speech" and that there are "cases in which the formula has reference to doctrine rather than to conduct."[2] Yet he insists that these formulations are "always quite short, the sort of phrase... which might flash into a person's mind after consideration of a question, as the summing up of the matter."[3] One may only remark here that if in the ultimate analysis *waḥy* means "the sort of phrase" which flashes into one's mind after consideration of a question as the decision and summing up of the matter, then there is no need for importing God or any external being into the scene and no sense in adding, as Bell does a few lines further on, that *waḥy* means "suggestion", "prompting" or "inspiration" which comes "into a person's mind apparently from outside himself."[4] The fact is that *waḥy*, in its *technical* sense, does not mean suggestion, prompting or inspiration, nor a person's intuition and conclusion after consideration of a matter, but divine communication to His Prophets and Messengers.

Continuing his analysis Bell says that *waḥy* means, "at any rate in the

1. *Ibid.*,147.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*,148.

early portions of the Qur'ân", not that it had been conveyed to the Prophet verbally, but "that the idea of composing a Qur'ân" had been "suggested" to him. Bell next states that as the Prophet's "theory of revelation developed" he "extended the signification of the word to cover the communication of long passages in verbal form"; for "there are some passages in which this would be *the natural implication*", such as 11:40, 12:120, 18:27 and 20:45.[1] Thus would Bell appear to suggest that parts of the Qur'ân are God's verbal communications and parts are not so. But he would not really commit himself to that position; for having made the above statement he attempts to neutralize its effect by saying that the passages referred to "are probably fairly late, and in all of them it would be at least possible to avoid giving the word the sense of actual verbal communication."[2] Clearly Bell here betrays his ultimate intention to "avoid", by any means, "giving the word the sense of actual verbal communication." One may only observe that it is of course *possible* to twist and "avoid" that sense, but that is "their natural implication", as Bell admits, perhaps unguardedly.

It may also be noted in this connection that whenever a Qur'ânic passage runs counter to his assumption Bell attempts to assign it either a late date or an earlier one, as it suits his purpose. The passages cited above are all Makkan. Even if for arguments' sake it is admitted that they are "probably fairly late", Bell does not appear consistent in his assertion that as the Prophet's theory of revelation developed he extended the signification of the word to cover verbal communication. For having said so he cites 42:50 (in fact 42:51) which says: "It is not for man that Allah speaks to him except by *waḥy*, or from behind a veil or He sends a messenger who communicates by His order what He wills..."[3] Bell states that according to this passage "it is impossible" to give the sense of verbal communication to the term *waḥy*.[4] And a little further on he states that in this passage "one almost sees Muḥammad's conception of how the revelation came to him, growing before our eyes..."[5] Thus Bell would have us believe in the same breath that as the Prophet's conception of *waḥy* developed he extented its meaning to cover

1. *Ibid.* The italicization is mine.
2. *Ibid.*
3. The passage runs as follows:
﴿وما كان لبشر أن يكلمه الله إلا وحياً أو من وراءِ حجاب أو يُرسل رسولا فيوحيَ بإذنه ما يشاء إنه علِيٌّ حكيم﴾ (٤٢ : ٥١)
4. *The Moslem World*, 1934, p.148.
5. *Ibid.*,152.

verbal communication, and that at the same time he said that *waḥy* could not be verbal communication! The fact is that neither was the Prophet nor is the Qur'ân so inconsistent. It is Bell himself who has misunderstood the sense of *waḥy* as given by the Qur'ân. He has also misunderstood the meaning of the passage 42: 51. It does in no way mean that *waḥy* cannot be verbal communication; it merely describes the *manner and methods* of communicating God's words to man. It would seem that as the passage says that God does not speak to man directly, i.e., face to face, Bell takes *waḥy* to mean God's "indirect speech" in the English grammatical sense!

That Bell puts that English grammatical sense of "indirect speech" is further clear from what he observes next, saying that the passage 42: 51 is a confession that the "direct" speech of Allah in some of the Qur'ânic passages where He speaks "in His proper person in the first person singular" is wrong. Bell writes: "There are still one or two passages in the Qur'ân in which Allah is made to speak in His own proper person in the first person singular; cf. li: 56- 58, lxxiv: 11- 15. If this direct speech of Allah to the Prophet was wrong, as the above passage seems to confess, how much more the claim to have actually seen Him."[1]

It should at once be pointed out that the passage does not say that *waḥy* cannot be verbal communication; it does not confess that the statements in the Qur'ân in "direct speech" of Allah (in the English grammatical sense) are wrong. Bell's assumption throughout that the Qur'ân is the Prophet's own composition is wrong and it is the point at issue. Not only the "one or two passages" cited here, nor even those admitted by Bell to imply verbal communication, but the entire Qur'ân, whether a passage is formulated in "direct speech" or in "indirect speech", is verbal comunication of God's words. Also the assumption that the Prophet initially claimed to have seen Allah is wrong. Before taking up that assumption, however, it remains to see what actually is the signification of *waḥy* glimpsed from the Qur'ân itself and where Bell has erred in thinking that *waḥy* means "sugegstion" or "prompting" or "inspiration".

IV. *WAḤY* IN THE QUR'ÂN AND THE 'QUR'ÂNIC *WAḤY*

It is common knowledge that in the seventy or so places where the word *waḥy* (in its different forms) occurs in the Qur'ân it bears a wide variety of senses depending on the context and the subject matter. This is only natural;

1. *Ibid.*

for in every language there are certain words each of which is used in a multiplicity of senses, sometimes even one directly opposite to the other, in accordance with the situations and contexts. In the case of such a word it is neither easy nor perhaps desirable to find a fixed meaning or set of meanings that would fit in with its use in all the occasions and situations. Bell has attempted to do something like that with regard to the term *waḥy*. He refers to some Qur'ânic passages where the therm occurs, such as *waḥy* to the bee, *waḥy* of one satan to another, *waḥy* to the earth, etc., and then says that in view of these instances the correct English rendering for the term should be "suggestion", "prompting" or "inspiration".

To anyone who has a knowledge of the Qur'ân it should be obvious that Bell's survey of the Qur'ânic use of the word is not at all comprehensive, nor even objective. He has selected only such passages as would support his point of view that the word does not mean verbal communication of a text; for that is what he confessedly intends to "avoid" even where that sense is the "natural" one. Even then, the meanings he puts on the expression do not appear to be adequate or appropriate in respect of all the instances he has cited. Thus, in the instances of *waḥy* to the Prophets for what he calls practical lines of conduct the meaning of the term should be, as pointed out earlier, command or directive and not simply suggestion or prompting as such. Again, the *'iqra'* passage where of course the expression *waḥy* does not occur but which Bell himself acknowledges to be part of the Qur'ânic *waḥy*, is a command, and not suggestion. More specifically, the *waḥy* to be given to the earth on the doomsday will not be a suggestion or prompting. Bell in fact commits a mistake in saying that the earth would be prompted to give up its dead — the meaning of the *'âyahs* (99:4-5) is: "On that day she shall speak out her affairs, because your Lord will *waḥy* her." Clearly the sense here is that God will command the earth, together with giving her the speaking power, to speak out her affairs. *Waḥy* here bears this dual sense; for everyone knows that the earth as it is now has no speaking power, and no simple suggestion or promting will make her speak. To give just one instance outside Bell's survey. "That is some of the tidings of things unseen which We *waḥy* to you", so runs 3:44 ﴿ذٰلك من أنباء الغيب نوحيه إليك...﴾.[1] Here the term *waḥy* clearly means the communication of some facts or information —some statements regarding some unseen (unknown) affair, and not at all suggestion or

1. See also Q.12:102.

inspiration about some unknown affair. Thus the meanings suggested by Bell do not appropriately and adequately convey the sense of the expression even in respect of the instances he has cited. If indeed a common English equivalent for *waḥy* must needs be found out, it should be "communication", rather than suggestion, prompting, etc. This meaning would fit in all the situations.

Since the word *waḥy* is used in various senses in connection with different subjects and situations the proper course in understanding the sense of the term in relation to any particular subject is to examine the uses that are made of it in connection only with that subject. It is on that basis that in Islamic religious parlance the term *waḥy* is applied only to God's communications to His Prophets and Messengers. In other words, the *technical* meaning of *waḥy*, apart from its general meanings, is God's communications to His Prophets. And just like the English word 'communication', *waḥy* means both the act or process of communicating (i.e. as verb) and also that which is communicated (i.e. the subject-matter). As such *waḥy* may be of various types in accordance with the manners or processes of its communication, as well as in accordance with the nature of the subject matter.

The passage 42:51 noticed above speaks about the manners or processes of the coming of *waḥy* to the Prophets. The *'âyah* mentions three ways in which God's words are made to reach His chosen man, namely, (a) by means of *waḥy,* (b) from behind the veil and (c) by sending a messenger (the angel Jibrîl) who "by His order communicates (*yûḥî*) what He wills". It may be observed that the nature of the first category is not further elaborated here. Obviously it includes all the various processes besides the other two. The Prophet's statement that sometimes *waḥy* used to come to him like the reverberation of a bell and that this was the manner which was the hardest on him,[1] may be considered as of the first category. An example of the second category is the famous incident of God's speaking to Mûsâ while remaining unseen. The third type is self-explanatory and is mentioned also in the New Testament.

Similarly *waḥy* may be of different types depending on the nature of the matter communicated. And of such various types according to subject-matter only one particular type of *waḥy* forms the scripture, the Book or Recitation (Qur'ân). Thus when Mûsâ was commanded to follow what is called a prac-

1. *Bukhârî*, no.2.

tical line of conduct, such as striking the rock with his staff, that was of course *waḥy*, but not the *Torah*. Only that which was specifically communicated as *Torah* was *Torah*. Likewise, of the various types of *waḥy* made to Muḥammad (ﷺ) only that which was communicated as Qur'ân is Qur'ân. And only this type is to be called the Qur'ânic *waḥy*. Hence, while each and every word of the Qur'ân is undoubtedly *waḥy*, each and every *waḥy* to Muḥammad (ﷺ) is not the Qur'ân. There are many examples of non-Qur'ânic *waḥy* to him, such as *ḥadîth qudsî*, the information given him in dream about the nature of the place of his migration, etc.

It should be clear from the above that to understand the nature of Qur'ânic *waḥy* it is necessary to concentrate our attention only upon such passages of the Qur'ân as speak of its communication to the Prophet, and not upon all the passages where the term *waḥy* occurs in its general senses. If we do so, it would be seen that there are a number of such passages which, while speaking about the delivery of the Qur'ân to the Prophet, also use the specific term *waḥy*. There are, however, a large number of other passages which very much speak about the coming of the Qur'ân to the Prophet but which do not employ the term *waḥy*. In fact it is this latter group of passges that contain more significant expressions elucidating the nature of Qur'ânic *waḥy*.

There are some forty passages in the Qur'ân wherein the term *waḥy* occurs in connection with its coming to the Prophet. While in the majority of such passages there is no particular indication of the nature of Qur'ânic *waḥy*, there are at least a dozen of them that contain expressions explaining its nature. An examinotion of these passages yields the following:

(1) *The Qur'ânic waḥy itself, and not anything else, which is to be recited / read out.*

﴿كذلك أرسلنـــك فى أمة قد خلت من قبلها أمم لتتلوا عليهم الذى أوحينا إليك... ﴾ (١٣ : ٣٠)

"Thus have We sent you (as Messenger) among a people before whom (other) peoples have passed away, in order that you recite unto them that which We have *waḥy*-ied to you." (13:30)

Here the clear implication is, it is that type of *waḥy* which is to be read out. That means it is in the form of a readable text and not simply a suggestion which is to be worked out and presented in the form of a reading material. And it is precisely because this type of *waḥy* is to be recited and read out, its other name is Qur'ân, the Reading or Recitation.

(2) *It is a Scripture (Book) which is waḥy-ied and which is to be recited.*

﴿واتلُ ما أوحيَ إليك من كتاب ربك لا مبدِّل لكلمـٰته...﴾ (١٨ : ٢٧)

"And recite what I *waḥy* to you of the Book of your Lord. None can change His words..." (18:27)

﴿اتل ما أوحيَ إليك من الكتـٰب...﴾ (٢٩ : ٤٥)

"Recite what I *waḥy* to you of the Book..." (29: 45)

﴿والذى أوحينا إليك من الكتـٰب هو الحق....﴾ (٣٥ : ٣١)

"And that which I have *waḥy*-ied to you of the Book is the truth" (35:31).

Thus what was communicated (*waḥy*-ied) to the Prophet was a Book, not that it was suggested to him to produce a book. It is also noteworthy that the first passage in this series speaks of the Qur'ânic *waḥy* as God's "words" (*kalimâtihi* كلمـٰته), emphasizing that there is none to change His words.

(3) *That which was waḥy-ied is a "Recitation - Qur'ân" and in a specific language.*

﴿وكذ'لك أوحينا إليك قرءانا عربيا...﴾ (٤٢ : ٧)

"Thus have We *waḥy*-ied to you a Qur'ân (Recitation) in Arabic". (42:7).[1]

Thus a "Recitation" had been *waḥy*-ied to the Prophet; not that he was *waḥy*-ied to produce a recitation.

(4) That the Prophet was first to listen to what was being *waḥy*-ied to him, and not to hasten to repeating/reciting it, before the completion of its communication.

﴿...ولا تعجل بالقرءان من قبل أن يقضـىٰ إليك وحيه...﴾ (٢٠ : ١١٤)

"And be not in haste with the Qur'ân (Recitation) before its *waḥy*-ing is completed." (20:114)

(5) That the Qur'ânic *waḥy*, and not simply the Qur'ân as such, consists of narrations/accounts.

﴿نحن نقص عليك أحسن القصص بما أوحينا إليك هـٰذا القرءان...﴾ (١٢ : ٣)

"We narrate unto you the best of narratives as We *waḥy* to you this Qur'ân." (12:3)

Here "the best of narratives" is a description of the *waḥy* which is communicated as Qur'ân. Indeed the expressions *naquṣṣu* (We narrate) and *'awḥaynâ* (We *waḥy*) in the passage are more or less coterminous.

(6) To the same effect are the passages that say that the Qur'ânic *waḥy* itself, and not simply the Qur'ân as such, consists of tidings/reports of events and affairs.

1. The same fact is stressed at another place where the term *'anjalnâ* (أنزلنا) instead of *'awḥaynâ* (أوحينا) is used. See Q.12:2.

﴿تلك من أنباء الغيب نوحيها إليك...﴾ (١١: ٤٩)

"Those are of the tidings of the unseen that We *waḥy* to you"...(11:49)

﴿ذٰلك من أنباء الغيب نوحيه إليك ...﴾ (١٢: ١٠٢)

"That is one of the tidings of the unseen which We *waḥy* to you." (12:102)

(7) Last but not least, it is specifically stressed that the Qur'ân is no composition of the Prophet himself and that nothing could be a graver sin on his part than to give out as God's words that which was not actually communicated to him as such.

﴿ومن أظلم ممن افترىٰ على الله كذبا أو قال أُوحِيَ إليَّ ولم يُوحَ إليه شيء ومن قال سأنزل مثل ما أنزلَ الله...﴾ (٦: ٩٣)

"And who could be a worse transgressor than the one who forges a lie against Allah or claims: 'It has been *waḥy*-ied to me,' while nothing has been *waḥy*-ied to him, and the one who says: 'I shall bring down the like of what Allah has sent down'?" (6:93).

In the passages cited above it is a description of the Qur'ânic *waḥy* itself that (a) it is some specific text which is to be recited; (b) that it is the Book which is communicated and which is Allah's words (*kalimâtihi*); (c) that it is communicated in Arabic language; (d) that the Prophet is to listen to it carefully before hastening to repeat it; (e) that sometimes it consists of "narratives" and "reports" and (f) that it is no composition of the Prophet himself and that nothing could be a graver sin on his part than to compose a text and then give it out as one from Allah. All these facts unmistakably emphasize textual and verbal communication and not at all the communication of ideas or thoughts nor what might be called "suggestion," "prompting", "inspiration", "intuition", etc.

These facts are drawn only from such passages as contain the term *waḥy* (in its various forms) in connection with the communication of the Qur'ân to the Prophet. These are, however, very strongly supplemented and corroborated by a far larger number of passages dealing with the same subject but not using the term *waḥy* and showing clearly that the Qur'ân was delivered to the Prophet verbatim and in the form of specific texts. These passages will be conisdered a little later on in connection with the discussion on the views of Watt who, it will be seen, attempts in his own way merely to substatntiate the views of Bell.[1] It should be clear from the above, however, that Bell's confusion and mistake clearly arise from: (a) his having concentrated his attention on the general use of the term in the Qur'ân; (b) his

1. *Infra*, pp. 503-512.

having failed to notice that the meanings he has suggested do not properly convey the sense of the expression even in the cases he has cited (e.g. *waḥy* to the earth); (c) his having made no distinction between the general sense and technical sense of the term; (d) his not having recognized the distinction between the Qur'ânic *waḥy* on the one hand and the other types of *waḥy* to the Prophet on the other; (e) his not having taken proper account of even those passages that use the term *waḥy* in speaking about the transmission of the Qur'ân to the Prophet, and, finally, (f) his not having at all taken into consideration the vast number of passages that deal with the same subject without using the term *waḥy* but employing a number of other expressions that very clearly and unequivocally elucidate the nature of Qur'ânic *waḥy*. In fine, it may once again be pointed out that one is of course free to believe or not to believe that the Qur'ân is God's words; but if one attempts to pronounce a judgement on its nature on the basis of the Qur'ânic evidence, one must take into account the whole range of its evidences and should not simply satisfy himself with those that are not quite to the point and, further, should not twist or misinterpret, instead of admitting, the "natural" sense of any expresseion or statement.

V. BELL'S THEORY ABOUT THE VISION OF GOD

As regards Bell's assumption that in the passage 53:1-18 (*sûrat al-Najm*) the Prophet initialiy claimed to have seen Allah, it is an elaboration of Margoliouth's assumption and is based totally upon a wrong interpretation of the passage. The meaning and implications of the passage have been noted earlier.[1] Here Bell's arguments and observations are taken into consideration.

Bell translates *'âyah* 4 of the passage ﴿علّمه شديد القوى﴾ as: "There taught him (or it) one strong in power." The plain translation of the passage should be: "One strong in power taught him." There is nothing in the *'ayah* to warrant the insertion of the word "there" at the beginning of the sentence; for the description of what he calls the "vision" comes after two more *'âyahs*, i.e., in *'âyahs* 7-9. Bell's main argument, however, centres round *'âyah* 10 of the passage ﴿فأوحىٰ إلى عبده ما أوحىٰ﴾. He rejects what he calls the Muslim commentators' view that the subject of the verb *'awḥâ* is Jibrîl while the pronoun in *'abdihi* is Allah, saying that it is an "unnatural use of language". He admits that Allah is indeed the pronoun in *'abdihi* and then says that "this involves that Allah is also the subject of the verb and in fact is being spoken

1. *Supra*, pp. 418-422.

of all through."[1]

It needs only to be pointed out here that unlike in English, in Arabic pronouns do not always relate to the immediate antecedent, nor is the same subject assumed in the cases of all the verbs in a single sentence. Instances of such use of pronouns are abundant even in modern Arabic. Even in English this particular grammatical rule is not always strictly observed and the meaning of an expression can be properly understood only with reference to the context and with a background knowledge of the facts.[2] So far as Arabic is concerned, however, there would be no "unnatural use of language" if there is one pronoun for the verb *'awḥâ* in the *'âyah* in question and another pronoun for the expression *'abdihi* in it.

In fact the nature of the entity spoken of should be understood primarily on the basis of its description in *'âyahs* 5-9, and not so much on the basis of *'âyah* 10 alone. It is described in *'ayahs* 5-6 as "one strong in power" and "endowed with wisdom (or mental and physical fitness". Bell himself acknowledges that the term *mirrah* in *'âyah* 6 is taken to mean fitness either of figure or of intellect.[3] As explained earlier,[4] these adjectievs are clearly relative in nature. By no stretch of the imagination could they be taken as attributes of God. Nowhere in the Qur'ân is God described in such terms and by such attributes. On the other hand angels are described, among others, by the adjective *shadîd* and its plural *shidâd*.[5] Thus even if the traditions on the subject are not brought to bear on the passage, its internal evidence decisively militates against any assumption that the entity spoken of is God. On the contrary, keeping the descriptive phrases in mind and relating this description to *'âyah* 18 of the same *sûrah* which speaks of what is seen as "one of the greatest signs of his Lord", and not the Lord Himself, the unavoidable meaning is that the entity spoken of is the angel. This is further clear from the Qur'ânic passage 81:19-27 which, as shown earlier,[6] should

1. *M.W.*, 1934, pp. 148-149.
2. See for instance this statement: "Perhaps his [Al-Zubayr's] relationship to Khadîjah through his father and to Muḥammad through his mother made conversion easy". (Watt, *M. at M.*, 92). One not knowing the facts might take the last "his" in the sentence to refer to Muḥammad (p.b.h.) and the "mother" spoken of to be his rather than Al-Zubayr's, which is what is meant here.
3. *M.W.*,1934, p. 145, n. 4.
4. *Supra*, pp. 420-421.
5. See Q. 66:6 and 72:8.
6. *Supra*, pp. 419-420.

be taken into consideration in this connection and which speaks of the entity as a "noble messenger", besides describing him as one "possessing power" ﴿ذى قوة﴾. Bell of course suggests that *'âyah* 18 of *sûrat al-Najm,* the passage 81:19-27 and the angel Jibril are all subsequent introductions. But the grounds on which these assumptions are made, as will be seen presently, are all untenable.

Bell seeks to support his assumption by suggesting that the Prophet, having claimed that he had seen Allah, subsequently realized the mistake and also faced objections to it. As evidence of this supposed "uneasiness" and "objections" Bell cites 17:60 [62] which reads, in Bell's translation: "We appointed the vision which We showed thee simply as a test for the people."[1] Bell argues that this *'âyah* refers not to *isrâ'* and *mi'râj* alluded to in 17:1, as the Muslim commentators hold, but to the "vision" narrated in *sûrat al-Najm*; for, according to him, *'âyah* 17:1 does not speak of any "vision".[2] This argument of Bell's is, however, not at all tenable; for 17:1 *does* speak of a vision and also qualifies it as a vision of some of the "signs" of Allah — لنريه من ءايـتنا — "in order that We might show him some of Our signs." Thus the very argument on which Bell builds up his assumption of "uneasiness" and "objections" about the "vision" in *sûrat al-Najm* is wrong.

Proceeding on the basis of these two faulty assumptions, namely, that in *sûrat al-Najm* the Prophet first claimed to have seen Allah and that there was "uneasiness" and "objections" about that claim, Bell suggests that the Prophet therefore subsequently modified his position; and this modification is noticeable in *'âyahs* 11-18 of the *sûrah.* Bell translates its *'âyah* 11 — ما كذب الفؤاد ما رأى — as: "The heart did not falsify what it saw", and says that the Prophet thus attempted to give the impression of a "spiritual appearance".[3]

Here again Bell makes a mistake about the pronouns. The pronoun implicit in the verb *mâ ra'a* ﴿ما رأى﴾ is the Prophet, not "it", i.e., the heart; for the simple reason that it does not really make sense to say that the heart did not falsify, i.e., invent the vision, if the intention was to stress that it was only a mental vision. On the contrary, since the "vision" was very much corporeal it was emphasized that the heart did not "falsify" it, i.e., it was no mis-

1. The text runs thus: ﴿وما جعلنا الرؤيا التى أريـنـك إلا فتنة للناس...﴾
2. *M.W.*,1934, p.151.
3. *Ibid.*

taken impression, no mere imagination, no hallucination on his part about what he saw. Far from mystifying the "vision", the statement here only emphasizes the reality of the experience. The pronoun in *mâ ra'a* is thus the Prophet. That the experience was one of physical sight is indicated again in *'âyah* 13 which speaks of its happening at another "descent" and, further, in *'âyah* 17 which specifically mentions *baṣar*, i.e., eye, as the instrument of the sight. Had the intention been to mystify and modify, neither the expression "another descent" nor *baṣar* would have been mentioned in connection with this so-called modifying statements. The alleged modification is totally groundless and the *'âyahs* 13, 17 and 18 do not at all modify anything.

Moreover, as already pointed out, the passage 53: 1- 18 should be interpreted in conjunction with 81:19-27 (*sûrat al-Takwîr*) which speaks of an "honourable messenger", i.e., an angel, as the conveyer of *waḥy*.[1] Bell suggests that this passage should not be allowed to influence the interpretation of 53:1-18. His reasons for this suggestion are: (a) that it is not until the Medinan period that Jibrîl is mentioned in this connection and (b) that when the Makkan unbelievers raised the objection, in Bell's words, "that an angel should have been sent as messenger or that at least an angel should have been conjoined with him", the Prophet's reply was "not that an angel was actually conveying the message to him, but simply that all former messengers had been men, xvi: 45, or that if an angel had been sent, that would have been the end of the matter, and there would have been no respite, vi; 8".[2] Bell further states that the "whole new world" of angels "opened up" to the Prophet much subsequently, —"note the phrase in xxv:1, 'He addeth in the creation what He pleaseth" as indicating possibly that the creatures there spoken of were new to Muḥammad".[3] Thus arguing Bell concludes that "the angel messenger of surah lxxxi must be later than the description of the visions in surah liii, and should not be allowed to influence its interpretation".[4]

Now, Bell is very much wrong in all his assumptions here, namely, (a) that the Prophet became aware of the existence of angels at a later date than that of his utterance of *sûrat al-Najm*; (b) the assumption about the nature of

1. *Supra*, pp.419-420.
2. *M.W.* 1934, p.149.
3. *Ibid.*,154.
4. *Ibid.*,150.

the Makkan unbelievers' demand for an angel messenger and (c) the assumption that Jibrîl was mentioned as the conveyer of *waḥy* only at Madina.

As regards the first assumption, it is decisively disproved by the very argument which Bell himself adduces to support his thesis. The fact that the Makkans asked for an angel messenger or an angel coadjutor with the Prophet shows that the Makkan unbelievers, not to speak of the Prophet himself, were very much aware of the existence of angels. In fact at three places in *sûrat al-Najm* itself the Prophet is found attempting, so to say, to correct the unbelievers' misconception about angels. Thus *'âyah* 21 points out their mistake in thinking that angels are God's daughters.[1] *'Âyah* 26 says that there are indeed many angels in the heaven but their intercession would be of no avail to anyone except with God's leave and pleasure;[2] and *'âyah* 27 states that "those who believe not in the hereafter name the angels with female names.[3] There are a large number of early Makkan passages in the Qur'ân showing that knowledge about the existence of angels had been fairly common in Arabia, particularly at Makka, since pre-Islamic times".[4] Hence nothing could be farther from the truth and more misleading than the assertion that the existence of angels dawned on Muḥammad (ﷺ) at a later stage of his career.

Similarly Bell misconstrues the passages 16:45 and 6:8 which relate to the unbelievers' demand for an angel to be sent as messenger to them and the replies given to that demand. It should be noted that these two are not the only passages in the Qur'ân dealing with the matter. There are at least ten more such passages relating to it.[5] These passages do in no way suggest that the Prophet was avoiding the question whether there were angels or not, nor whether an angel had brought to him God's word. A cursory glance at these passages would make it unmistakably clear that the unbelievers' demand arose out of a two-fold attitude on their part. They refused to believe that a human being like themselves could have been a messenger of God. They also sought to discredit the Prophet by saying in effect that if indeed an angel

1. The text runs as follows: ﴿أَلَكُم الذكر وله الأنثى﴾
2. The text runs as follows:
﴿وكم من ملك فى السمٰوٰت لا تغنى شفٰعتهم شيئا إلا من بعد أن يأذن الله لمن يشاء ويرضىٰ﴾
3. The text runs as follows: ﴿إن الذين لا يؤمنون بالأخرة ليسمون الملٰئكة تسمية الأنثى﴾
4. See for instance Q. 69:17; 70:4; 74:31; 89:22 and 97;4 out of some fifty such passages.
5. See for instance Q. 6:111; 6:158; 15:7-8; 16:33; 17:95; 23:24; 25:7; 25:21-22; 41:14; 43:53.

had delivered God's word to him, why was not an angel sent to them instead as His messenger or at least as a co-warner with Muḥammad (ﷺ). It may also be noted that the Makkan unbelievers could not by themselves have conceived the idea of an angel messenger being sent to them. For, hitherto they only imagined that angels were God's daughters and that their primary function, as God's favoured ones, was to intercede with Him on behalf of human beings. The idea that an angel could be sent as God's messenger therefore appears to have dawned on them only when the Prophet had made the claim that an angel had actually delivered to him God's word. At any rate, their demand was clearly a counter-claim arising out of what the Prophet had asserted.

The nature of the unbelievers' objection and challenge may be gleaned from 25:7 (*sûrat al-Furqân*) and 15: 6-7 (*sûrat al-Ḥijr*). They run respectively as follows:

﴿وقالوا مالِ هـٰـذا الرسول يأكل الطعام ويمشي في الأسواق لولا أنزل إليه ملك فيكون معه نذيرا﴾ (٢٥ : ٧)

"And they say: 'What sort of a messenger is this, who eats food and walks in the markets? Why has not an angel been sent down to him to be a warner along with him?'" (25:7)

﴿وقالوا يـٰـأيها الذى نزل عليه الذكر إنك لمجنون (٦) لو ما تأتينا بالملـٰـئكة إن كنت من الصـٰـدقين (٧)﴾ (١٥ : ٦-٧)

"And they say: 'O the one on whom the text has been sent down! Truly you are mad. Why not bring to us the angels, if you are of the truthful?'" (15:6-7)

While the first passage shows that the unbelievers could not persuade themselves that a human being could be God's messenger, the second passage illustrates the retorting nature of their demand. The form of the unbelievers' address in the second passage, "O the one on whom the text has been sent down", is very significant. It in no way suggests that they believed in it. It is only a taunting repetition of what they were told, namely, that God's word had been "sent down" to him.[1] The phrase *nuzzila* (نزّل), "has been sent down", implies that some intermediary had been mentioned as the conveyer of the text. This is further clear from the succeeding *'âyah*, 15:7, which demands of the Prophet to produce the angels if he was "truthful", that is, if he had spoken the truth in stating that an angel had delivered to him the divine text. The form of the Prophet's claim is discernible from the nature of

1. See also 38:8 which says: ﴿أءنزل عليه الذكر ...﴾ -"What! has the récit been sent down to him?"

the retort. Surely the unbelievers would not have asked for the angels to be produced before them if the Prophet had stated to them that he had receieved the text directly from God. Thus the very question which Bell raises and the Qur'ânic passages relating to them decisively disprove both the assumptions that the Prophet had initially claimed to have received the text directly from God and that he became aware of the existence of angels only at a subsequent stage of his career.

Again, while noticing two of the replies given to the unbelievers' demand, Bell does not mention the other very pertinent reply stated in the *'âyah* immediately following the one he cites, namely, 6:9. It is pointed out there that were an angel sent to them he would still have been sent in the form of a man and in that case they would have been in no less confusion. The folly in their demand is further pointed out in 17:95 where it is stated that had the earth been inhabited by angels walking about there in peace and quietness, certainly an angel would have been sent as a messenger. In all these passages the objection which is being combated is not whether angels did exist or not but, if an angel did really deliver God's word to Muḥammad (ﷺ), why did one not physically appear before them as God's messenger or at least as co-messenger with him. In other words, why did Muḥammad (ﷺ) not ask the angel to come up to vouchsafe for him before his people?

Thus the suggestion that the Prophet had initially claimed to have seen Allah because he was unaware of the existence of angels at that stage and because the passage 53:1-18 contains indications of such a "vision" and its subsequent "modifications" is totally unwarranted and untenable. Before leaving this particular assumption, however, one more item of Bell's reasonings may be noted. While maintaining that the traditions regarding the coming of *waḥy* are later inventions Bell at the same time does not refrain from invoking Jâbir ibn 'Abd Allah's report on the subject given in *Bukhârî*[1] to support his assumption. He says that Jâbir's report implies "that the vision was one of Allah", adding that as it is "contrary to orthodox sentiment", it "must have come into existence before orthodox tradition was fixed".[2] Bell says so on the basis of the expression (فإذا هو جالس على كرسي) occurring in the report. He translates this expression as: "and there He was sitting upon the Throne", and argues that the "throne" is "appropriate" to Allah.[3]

1. *Bukhârî*, nos. 4992-4995.
2. *M.W.*, 1934, 17-18.
3. *Ibid.*

Now, it needs to be pointed out only that the word *kursî* (كرسي) is in the indefinite form in the report in question, meaning "a chair", and not in the definite form meaning "the chair", as Bell mistranslates it. There is thus no question of its being exclusively "appropriate" to Allah. It may further be noted that in two of the versions of the same report in *Bukhârî* (i.e., nos. 4994 and 4995) it is specifically mentioned that the entity seen was "the very angel who had come to me at Ḥirâ'" (فإذا الملك الذي جاءني بحراء). Bell is of course aware of this fact; but he attempts to explain it away by saying that Jibrîl was imported into the story fairly early".[1] This is an unwarranted statement. He does not even explain what he means by "fairly early". Does he mean to say that it happened before this specific version of Jâbir's report came into existence? But even that would not resolve all the difficulty. For Jâbir was an *anṣârî* (helper, d. 74 H.) and came into contact with the Prophet after his migration to Madina. Jâbir also specifically states that he received his information from the Prophet himself. Now, as Bell says that the Prophet had modified his initial account of the "vision" in view of the objections to it, and that obviously at Makka, he could not have given an impression of having seen Allah to Jâbir. In fact none of the versions of Jâbir's report implies that the "vision" was one of Allah. Also Bell's statements that the so-called "orthodox tradition" had been formed after Jâbir's report had come into existence and that Jibrîl was introduced "fairly early" in the story are somewhat self-contradicttory and confusing; for according to Bell's own assumption the Prophet had supposedly modified his position before the migration. Hence there was no question of the so-called "orthodox" tradition having been formed subsequently to the coming into existence of Jâbir's account. All the four forms of Jâbir's report, taken together, clearly show that the entity seen was the angel Jibrîl, not Allah.

VI. THE ASSUMPTION ABOUT JIBRÎL

Bell's fifth assumption, namely, that the passage 81:19-27 which speaks of a "noble messenger" as the conveyer of *waḥy* was given out by the Prophet at a later stage of his career and therefore it should not be allowed to influence the interpretation of 53:1-18, has already been shown to be wrong; for the two props on which this assumption is made to stand, namely, that the Prophet was not initially aware of the existence of angels and that he avoided telling the unbelievers that an angel had delivered to him God's words are

1. *Ibid.*,18.

totally wrong. The passage 81:19-27 should therefore be brought into consideration in interpreting the passage 52:1-18.

This brings us to the last item in the series of Bell's assumptions, namely, that Jibrîl was introduced as the conveyer of *waḥy* only at Madina. Now, it has been seen:

(i) that angels had been known to the Prophet and his contemporaries at Makka at least since the beginning of his mission;

(ii) that they were spoken of as messengers between God and His Prophet;

(iii) that it was specifically stated at Makka that a "noble messenger" had brought the revealed text to the Prophet;

(iv) that it was because of this calim that the Makkan unbelievers came forward with the counter-claim that an angel should have been sent as a messenger or joined as co-messenger with Muḥammad (ﷺ);

(v) that the traditions relating to the coming of *waḥy* and specifically mentioning the angel Jibîl as its conveyer are not later fabrications, as Bell supposes; and

(vi) that even the Christians at Makka and elsewhere in Arabia believed and knew that Jibrîl was the angel who conveyed God's revelation to His Prophets.

In view of all these proven facts it is just not reasonable to suppose that Jibrîl came to be known to the Prophet only after he had come over to Madina.

True, Jibrîl is mentioned by that very name only three times in the Qur'ân and all these are Madinan passages, namely, 2:97; 2:98 and 66:4. Of these, it is only in 2:97 where that angel is spoken of as the conveyer of *waḥy*. The wording of the passage clearly shows that it is a reply to objections raised about Jibrîl in some quarters and that some talk about him had already been going on before this *'âyah* was given out. In fact all the reports regarding the occasion of revelation of this passage agree in stating that when the Jews at Madina came to know that the Prophet maintained that the angel Jibrîl brought revelations to him they expressed their antipathy towards that angel and said that had the Prophet said that the angel Mikhael was the conveyer of *waḥy* they would have followed him (the Prophet). Thereupon this passage was given in reply to their objection.[1] The passage itself and its context as

1. See for instance Al-Ṭabarî, *Tafsîr*, II, 36 and Ibn Kathîr, *Tafsîr*, I, 185-191.

known from the reports do not in any way indicate that Jibrîl was being spoken of here for the first time as the conveyer of revelations.

Moreover, the fact that Jibrîl is spoken of by that very name in the Madinan passages only does not mean that there is no reference to him in the Makkan *sûrahs*. In fact the expressions *rasûl karîm* (a noble messenger) in 81:19 and *shadîd al-quwâ* (one strong in power) in 53:3 are taken by all commentators to mean the angel Jibrîl. It would even seem that the expression *shadîd al-quwâ* and the term Jibrîl are coterminous; for, according to one authority, Jibrîl is a compound word made up of *Jabr* and *Il*, meaning a "brave one of God" or "servant of God". *Jabr* in Hebrew is *Geber* which means "a servant", and *Il* means "the mighty", "the powerful".[1] Also the expressions *Rûḥ al-Quds* (the spirit of holiness)[2] in 16:102 and *Al-Rûḥ al-'Amîn* (the trustworthy spirit) in 26:193 are unanimously taken by the commentators to refer to Jibrîl. It may also be noted that the term *Nâmûs* occurring in the tradition means the trusted or the confidential angel.[3] Thus both the Qur'ân and the traditions, which should not be kept out of consideration, show that Jibrîl was mentioned as the conveyer of revelations from the very beginning of the Prophet's mission.

1. William Geseneus, *Hebrew-English Lexicon*, cited in Malik Ghulam Farid, *The Holy Qur'ân English Translation and Commentary*, Rabwah (Pakistan), 1969, p.46, n.123.

2. Not 'Holy Spirit'; for the construction is *muḍâf-muḍâf-'ilayhi*, not *ṣifat-mawṣûf*.

3. See the term *Nâmûs* in *Lisân al-'Arab*.

CHAPTER XIX
WAḤY AND THE ORIENTALISTS: III. WATT'S TREATMENT OF AL-ZUHRÎ'S REPORT

Watt takes over from his predecessors, particularly from Margoliouth and Bell, and attempts to support mainly their assumptions. Thus he reiterates (a) that the Prophet had initially claimed to have seen Allah; (b) that Jibrîl was introduced at a later stage as the conveyer of *waḥy*; (c) that *waḥy* does not mean verbal communication of a text, but "suggestion" or "inspiration" to follow a practical line of conduct or to give out the Qur'ân and (d) that the Qur'ânic *waḥy* is in some form or other part of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) consciousness.

In reproducing his predecessors' views, however, Watt does not always recite their premises and grounds. Hence his statements sometimes appear to be mere assertions. These would be better understood, however, by those who are conversant with his predecessors' writings, especially those of Margoliouth and Bell. But though Watt reproduces mainly their views, he does not always follow them in his use of the sources. Thus, while Bell would totally discount the traditions concerning the coming of *waḥy* as fabrications of a later age and would not take them into consideration in this connection, Watt would not do so. He would rather try to support the Margoliouth-Bell assumption by having recourse to both the Qur'ân and the traditions. In doing so, however, he would select only such traditions as he thinks support his views. In such a case he would not go into the question of the authenticity of the particular tradition and would simply dispose of the matter by observing that not much is to be gained by discussing the *isnâd*. Even then he would not abide by the information supplied by his chosen piece of the report as a whole but would accept only those parts of it as suit his purpose and would reject the other parts as of doubtful validity. He also advances some further arguments, not quite his own, to support the Margoliouth-Bell theory. Thus he uses the expressions *al-rûḥ* and *al-ḥaq*, mentioned in the Qur'ân and traditions in connection with the coming of *waḥy*, and interprets them as being coterminous with God. Again, while Margoliouth uses the writing of Podmore, Watt has recourse to that of A.Poulain to provide a psychological/mystical explanation of the phenomena of *waḥy*.

Another remarkable feature of Watt's approach is that unlike his predecessors he makes a specific claim to impartiality in theological matters and to academic objectivity. He even castigates the previous European writers in general for their lack of sympathetic understanding of Islam and its Prophet. Such declarations of impartiality and neutrality, besides being uncalled for, are sharply at odds with the practical line of approach he adopts, for he in fact and essence reiterates mainly his predecessors' views and assumptions, and that too with no discernible degree of greater sympathy towards Islam and the Prophet.

I. AL-ZUHRÎ'S REPORT

Watt starts his discussion on the coming of *waḥy* by quoting what he calls Al-Zuhrî's report. This report, it may be mentioned, is in fact 'Â'ishah's report coming through Al-Zuhrî and reproduced in various works, with some variations in the text. We have already dealt with this report as given in *Bukhârî* as well as in *Al-Ṭabarî*, noting the reasons why Al-Ṭabarî's version cannot be preferred to that in *Bukhârî*.[1] Watt, however, prefers Al-Ṭabarî's version saying that it "has not been rewritten, as has Ibn Hishâm's version".[2] He does not mention Bukhârî at all in this connection though, it is to be noted, that Bukhârî's work is earlier than Al-Ṭabarî's. In the latter work Al-Zuhrî's report consists of some three paragraphs, the first two being a continuous account and the third being in the nature of an independent report reproduced by Al-Ṭabarî a couple of pages subsequent to the first two paragraphs. Watt reproduces this text in his own translation. In doing so, however, he breaks the three paragraphs into as many as 12 "passages", which he numbers alphabetically from A to L, stating that this has been done "for convenience" and that the divisions "come at breaks in az-Zuhrî's material, as indicated by the change of narrator".[3] In order to enable the reader the better to understand Watt's treatment we reproduce in the footnote Al-Ṭabarî's text in Arabic, indicating in square brackets the portions that are broken by Watt into 12 "passages" respectively from A to L.[4]

1. *Supra*, pp. 369-75, 380-386.
2. Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, p.40.
3. *Ibid.*
4. The Arabic text runs as follows:

[فحدثني أحمد بن عثمان المعروف بأبي الجوزاء، قال. حدثنا وهب بن جرير، قال. حدثنا أبي، قال. سمعتُ النَّعمان بن راشد، يحدث عن الزهري، عن عُروة، عن عائشة أنها قالت· كان أول ما ابتدئ به رسول الله ﷺ من الوحي الرؤيا الصادقة، كانت تجيء مثل فلق الصبح،]
[ثم حُبّب إليه الخلاء، فكان بغار بحراء يتحنّث فيه الليالي ذوات العدد قبل أن يرجع إلى أهله، ثم يرجع إلى أهله، فيتزود لمثلها؛ حتى فجأه =

The following is how Watt reproduces in his own translation Al-Ṭabarî's version of Al-Zuhrî's report.

A.. In this passage Watt places the first part of 'Â'ishah's report which says that the beginning of revelation was *al-ru'yâ al-ṣâdiqah*, which he translates as "true vision". "It used to come like the breaking of dawn".

B. In the second passage Watt places the portion which immediately follows the above and which says that afterwards solitude became dear to the Prophet and he went to Ḥirâ' for *taḥannuth*, ending with the statement: "At length, unexpectedly, the Truth came to him and said, O Muḥammad, thou art the Messenger of God".

C. In the third passage Watt puts the portion wherein the Messenger of Allah says he had been standing but felt on his knees, then he went to Khadîjah (r.a.) and asked her to cover him, which was done, until the terror left him; ending with: "Then he came to me and said, O Muḥammad, thou art the Messenger of God".

D. In the fourth passage is placed that part wherein the Messenger of Allah is stated to have said that he had been meditating throwing himself from a mountain crag, but while he was so meditating, "he appeared to me and said, O Muḥammad, I am Gabriel, and thou art the Messenger of God".

E. In the fifth passage is placed the part which narrates the angel's saying to the Messenger of Allah: "Recite", and the latter's replying: "I cannot recite (or "what shall I recite")"; then the angel's having squeezed him thrice and then saying: "Recite in the name of thy Lord who created. And I recited".

F. In the sixth passage is placed the portion of the report which speaks of the Mes-

= الحقّ، فأتاه، فقال: يا محمد، أنتَ رسول الله!] قال رسول الله ﷺ: فجثوْتُ لركبتي وأنا قائم، ثم زحفتُ ترجُفُ بوادري، ثم دخلت على خديجة، فقلت: زمّلُوني، زمّلُوني، زمّلُوني! حتى ذهب عني الرَّوْع، ثم أتاني فقال: يا محمّد، أنت رسولُ الله]. [قال: فلقد هممت أن أطرح نفسي من حَالقٍ من جبل، فتبدّى لي حين هممت بذلك، فقال: يا محمّد، أنا جبريل، وأنت رسول الله]. [ثم قال: اقرأ، قلت: ما أَقْرأُ؟ قال: فأخذني فغتَّني ثلاث مرات، حتى بلغ منّي الجهد، ثم قال: ﴿اقرأ باسم ربك الذى خلق﴾، فقرأتُ] [فأتيتُ خديجة فقلت: لقد أشفقتُ على نفسي، فأخبرتها خبري، فقالت: أبشرْ، فوالله لا يُخزيكَ الله أبداً، ووالله إنّك لتَصِلُ الرَّحم، وتصدقُ الحديث، وتؤدي الأمانة، وتحملُ الكَلَّ وتَقْرِي الضيف، وتُعين على نوائب الحق]. [ثم انطلقتْ بي إلى ورقة بن نوفل بن أسد، قالت: اسمع من ابن أخيك، فسألني فأخبرته خبري، فقال: هذا الناموسُ الذي أنزِل على موسى بن عمران، ليتني فيها جَذَعٌ! ليتني أكون حيًا حينَ يخرجُك قومُك! قلت: أمُخْرِجيَّ هم؟ قال: نعم، إنه لم يجئْ رجُلٌ قط بما جئتَ به إلا عُودِيَ، ولئن أدركني يومك أنصرك نصراً مؤزرا]. [ثم كان أول ما نزل علَيَّ من القرآن بعد «اقرأ»: ﴿نٓ والقلم وما يسطرون * ما أنت بنعمة ربك بمجنون * وإن لك لأجرا غير ممنون * وإنك لعلىٰ خلق عظيم * فستبصر ويبصرون﴾، و﴿يـٰأيها المدثر * قم فأنذر﴾ و ﴿والضحىٰ * والّيل إذا سجىٰ﴾].

حدثنا محمد بن عبد الأعلى، قال: حدثنا ابن ثور، عن معمر عن الزهري، قال: فتر الوحي عن رسول الله ﷺ فترةً، فحزن حزناً شديداً، جعل يغدو إلى رءوس شواهق الجبال ليتردَّىٰ منها، فكلما أوفَىٰ بذروة جبل تبدَّىٰ له جبرئيل، فيقول: إنك نبي الله، فيسكن لذلك جأشُه، وترجع إليه نفسُه]، [فكان النبي ﷺ يحدث عن ذلك، قال: بينما أنا أمشي يوماً، إذ رأيت المَلَك الذي كان يأتيني بحراء، على كرسي بين السماء والأرض، فجئشت منه رعباً، فرجعت إلى خديجة، فقلت: زمّلُوني]، [فزمّلناه ـ أي دثرناه ـ فأنزل الله عزّ وجلّ: ﴿يـٰأيها المدثر * قم فأنذر * وربك فكبر * وثيابك فطهر﴾]. [قال الزهري: فكان أول شيء أنزِل عليه: ﴿اقرأ باسم ربك الذى خلق﴾ حتى بلغ ﴿ما لم يعلم﴾]

senger of Allah's going back to Kahdîjah, his expressing anxiety about himself and her words of consolation to him, ending with the statement: "You succour the agents of the truth (?)"

G. In the seventh is placed the portion which narrates Khadîjah's taking her husband to Waraqah ibn Nawfal, the latter's listening to the Messenger of Allah's experience and then remarking: "This is the *nâmûs* which was sent down (or revealed) to Mûsâ", adding that the Messenger of Allah would be expelled by his tribe at which he expressed his surprise, etc., ending with Waraqah's remark that if he lived long he would help him valiantly.

H. In the eighth passage is placed that part of the report wherein the Messenger of Allah is stated to have said that the first part of the Qur'ân to be revealed to him was *sûrah* 96, *sûrah* 68:1-5 (*al-Qalam*), *sûrah* 74:1-2 (*al-Muddaththir*) and *sûrah* 93:1-2 (*al-Ḍuḥâ*).

I. In the ninth passage is reproduced Al-Zuhri's report about the *fatrah* (pause) in *waḥy*, which is given by Al-Ṭabarî a couple of pages subsequently and which says that the Messenger of Allah became so sorrowful at the cessation of *waḥy* that he used to go to the mountain tops to throw himself down from them. "But whenever he reached the summit of a mountain Gabriel would appear to him and say thou art the Prophet of God. At this his restlessness would cease...".

J. In the tenth passage is placed that part of the report which says that speaking about *fatrah* the Messenger of Allah said: "While I was walking one day, I saw the angel who used to come to me at Ḥirâ' on a throne (*kursî*) between heaven and earth. I was stricken with fear of him, and returned to Khadîjah and said: cover me".

K. In the eleventh passage is placed: "So we covered him, that is we put a *dathar* on... and God the most high sent down, O thou clothed in *dathar*... Thy garments purify".

L. In the 12th is placed Al-Zuhrî's statement: The first to be revealed to him was "Recite in the name of thy Lord who created... up to what he did not know."

Watt also gives the sumamry of Al-Zuhrî's report from Jâbir ibn 'Abd Allah al-Anṣârî about *fatrah* and the revelation of the first part of *sûrat al-Muddaththir*. Thus having reproduced Al-Zuhrî's report Watt proceeds to "consider the internal evidence of the passages" and what he calls the "various featutes of the stories". He does so under seven sub-headings and a final section. The sub-headings are as follows:

(a) "*Muḥammad's visions*"

(b) "*The visit to Ḥirâ'; taḥannuth*"

(c) "'*Thou art the Messenger of God*'"

(d) "'*Recite*'"

(e) "*Sûrat al-Muddaththir; the Fatrah*"

(f) "*Muḥammad's fear and despair*"

(g) "*Encouragement from Khadîjah and Waraqah*"

The title of the final section is: "The form of Muḥammad's Prophetic consciousness". These are discussed below.

II. "MUḤAMMAD'S VISIONS"

Watt starts his discussion under this first sub-heading of his by referring to that part of Al-Zuhrî's report which he reproduces in his passage A. He says that there are no good grounds for doubting that Muḥammad's (ﷺ) prophetic experience began with "true vision" and observes that this "is quite distinct from dreams" and that "visions are mentioned also in B and J (apart from the appearances of Gabriel in D and I)".[1]

It may at once be pointed out that Watt adopts here simply Bell's translation of the expression *al-ru'yâ al-ṣâdiqah*. This expression, as already pointed out,[2] means "true dreams", not "true vision". It may be recalled that Al-Zuhrî's, or rather 'Â'ishah's report in *Bukhârî* which Bell quotes, contains the expression "in sleep" after "true dreams". Al-Ṭabarî's version of the report, which is not quite accurate, and which Watt adopts, does not of course contain the expression "in sleep", but it is clear from the internal evidence of even this version that al-*ru'yâ al-ṣâdiqah* which is stated as the beginning of the Prophetic experience is a stage quite distinct from, and prior to the one that followed, namely, *al-taḥannuth* at Ḥirâ' and the experience which came in its wake. The unequivocal statement of the report, which Watt places at the start of his passage B, is: "Afterwards solitude became dear to him and he would go to a cave on Ḥirâ' to engage in *taḥannuth...*" Watt disregards this clear distinction between the two types of experiences described in the report, adopts the faulty or rather tendentious translation of Bell and thus equates the expression *al-ru'yâ al-ṣâdiqah* with the other type of experience described in his passages B and J, thus doing violence to the tenor and purport of the text he himself adopts. The post-*taḥannuth* experience is nowhere described in the traditions, nor in the Qur'ân as *al-ru'yâ*

1. Watt, *Muḥammad at Mecca*, p.42.
2. *Supra*, pp. 426-428.

al-ṣâdiqah. A moment's thinking also makes it clear that the addition of the adjective *al-ṣâdiqah* to the act, *al-ru'yâ*, indicates that it is a description of that type of viewing which is usually and normally not "true", that is dream. No one would bother to add the adjective, "true", to the act of physical viewing with one's eyes.

Watt's purpose is, however, to bring this so-called "vision" in line with what is described in *sûrat al-Najm*, and thus support the Margoliouth-Bell theory discussed in the previous chapter. Hence, immediately after having made the above noted statements Watt cites that *sûrah* as supportive evidence of the "vision" and quotes its first 18 *'âyahs* (omitting *'âyahs* 11 and 12) in his own translation. He then observes that "there are grounds for thinking that Muḥammad originally interpreted these as visions of God Himself".[1] The grounds mentioned by Watt are:

(i) "There is no mention of Gabriel in the Qur'ân until the Medinan period."

(ii) The subject of the verbs in verse 10 of *sûrat al-Najm* should be God, or else the construction becomes "awkward".

(iii) "The phrase at the end of passage B, 'the Truth came to him and said...' is similar in import, for "the Truth is a way of referring to God".[2]

(iv) Jâbir ibn 'Abd Allah's tradition, which is referred to by Bell, quotes the Prophet as saying (in Bell's translation): "... I heard a voice calling me, and I looked all around but could see no one; then I looked above my head and there *he* was sitting upon the throne".[3]

In translating the passage of *sûrat al-Najm* Watt adopts Bell's rendering of the expressions *waḥy* and *'awḥâ* as "suggestions" and "suggested". These meanings, as pointed out in the previous chapter, are not at all correct for Qur'ânic *waḥy.* Secondly, Watt's statement: "Muḥammad interpreted these" etc., contains two innuendoes. It implies that the "vision" was not actual but something mental, a view which Watt attempts to establish all through. It also suggests that the passage of *sûrat al-Najm*, on which Watt obviously bases his statement, is an "interpretation," that is, a composition by

1. Watt, *Muḥammad at Mecca*, p 42.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*

Muḥammad (ﷺ), a view which is common to all the orientalists, though Watt appears not to avow it openly.

As regards the grounds mentioned by Watt all, except iii, are simply Bell's. These assertions of his and their premises have already been examined and it has been shown that each item of the assumptions is untenable.[1] In iv Watt does not specifically reiterate Bell's mistaken claim that "the throne" is appropriate to Allah and leaves the reader to understand it. The mistake in this particular assumption has also been pointed out.[2] As regards Jâbir ibn 'Abd Allah al-'Anṣârî's report, which Watt himself cites,[3] it may be noted that it unequivocally points out that the Messenger of Allah "saw the angel" who used to come to him at Ḥirâ', "on a chair between the sky and the earth."

Regarding Watt's own addition to the list of arguments, namely iii above, two things need to be noted. In the first place, the version of Al-Zuhrî's report in *Bukhârî* and other works is slightly different at this point. It is ...حتى جاءه الحق وهو فى غار حراء فجاءه المَلَكُ فقال meaning "till the truth came to him while he was in the cave of Ḥirâ'. The angel came to him and said...." However, in Al-Ṭabarî's version, which Watt quotes, the expression runs as: فجأه الحق ، فأتاه ، فقال , meaning "Till the truth surprised him. He came to him and said...." Thus the expression فجاءه (*Fa-jâ'ahu*) is replaced by فجأه (*Faja'ahu*), and there is no mention of the angel at this point. But it is clear that فجأه الحق (*Faja'ahu al-ḥaqq*) is one sentence, and فأتاه ، فقال (*Fa-'atâhu fa-qâla*) is another sentence. Watt, however, does not translate this portion of the report quite faithfully. He combines the two sentences into one, translating it as: "At length unexpectedly the Truth came to him and said..." The Arabic equivalent of this translation would be: فجأه الحق وقال (*Faja'ahu al-ḥaqq wa qâla*). Watt has thus combined the two sentences into one, omitting from his translation the expression فأتاه (*Fa-'atâhu*), which is the beginning of an independent sentence. He has also capitalized the first letter of "truth" so that the meaning is more in line with his suggestion. If this was not done, and if due attention was paid to the specific mention of the angel at two places in the

1. *Supra*, pp.423-424.
2. *Supra*, pp.439-446.
3. Watt, *op. cit.*, p.41. See also Al-Ṭabarî, *Târikh*, 1156. The text runs as follows:

حدثني يونس بن عبد الأعلى، قال: أخبرنا ابن وهب، قال: أخبرني يونس، عن ابن شهاب، قال: أخبرني أبو سلمة بن عبد الرحمن، أن جابر بن عبد الله الأنصاري، قال: قال رسول الله ﷺ وهو يحدّث عن فَتْرة الوحي: بينا أنا أمشي سمعتُ صوتاً من السماء، فرفعت رأسي، فإذا الملك الذي جاءني بِحراء جالس على كرسي بين السماء والأرض...

text which is continuous here in the original but which Watt has broken into as many as 7 passages "for convenience", it would have been clear that the subject of the verb *Fa-'atâhu* (فأتاه) is the angel. Even after such division of a continuous text Watt recognizes that the angel Jibrîl is mentioned by name not very far away from this part, i.e. in what he chops into passage D.

Further, it is to be noticed that in the original Arabic text, which is continuous, the appearance of the entity is mentioned three times thus: "So he came to him and said..... Then he came to me and said.... Thereupon he appeared before me...and said O Muḥammad, I am Jibril...."(فأتاه فقال...ثم أتاني فقال...فتبدى لي...فقال يا محمد أنا جبريل). The prepositions *fa*, *thumma* and *fa* prefixed to the verbs show conclusively that it is a continuous narrative and that the same entity is spoken of throughout. Up to this point there is no break in the narrative nor any change of narrator. The sole narrator here is 'Â'ishah who is giving the report sometimes in her own words, sometimes in the words of the Prophet himself. Watt himself seems to recognize this fact when he says: "Passages A to H were presumably continuous in az-Zuhrî, but they need not all have come from 'Â'ishah.."[1] The manoeuvre thus made here to create doubt about 'Â'ishah being the narrator is obvious but not justifiable. Passage H of course comes in Al-Ṭabarî in a separate paragraph, and it need not have come from her; but there can be no doubt that the section previous to H is a continuous narrative and the sole narrator is 'Â'ishah. Watt makes another attempt to confuse the issue here. He says, the fact "that Ibn Isḥâq breaks off 'Â'ishah's narrative after the first sentence of B [i.e.,"Afterwards solitude became dear to him"] is probably due to his having other versions of the remainder which he preferred, and does not necessarily indicate a break in the source at that point."[2] The remark is curious because if Ibn Isḥâq's having preferred "other versions" does not "necessarily indicate a break in the source at that point", then why this emphasis on his breaking off of 'Â'ishahs narrative? The remark is also inappropriate, because we are concerned here with 'Âishah's (Al-Zuhrî's) account as given in Al-Ṭabari, and not with Ibn Isḥâq's version which Watt himself does not adopt because, according to him, it has been rewritten. It appears that while dividing Al-Zuhrî's account into so many passages on the ground of what he calls breaks in the material indicated by change of narrator, he cannot at the same time conceal the fact that there really is no break in the narrative in its greater and

1. Watt, *Muḥammad at Mecca*, p.41.
2. *Ibid.*

most material part, nor any change of narrator there, and that the divisions made by him are arbitrary and not in accord with the grounds he has advanced.

It seems that the real reason for his having chopped Al-Zuhrî's account into so many separate passages is to suggest, as he does shortly afterwards, that the speaker to Muhammad (ﷺ) in passage B is "the Truth", in C "merely he", and in D and I Jibrîl.[1] Watt also intends to maintain that Jibrîl, who is mentioned by name in two of the passages, need not be taken into account in connection with the coming of *wahy* to Muhammad (ﷺ). It must not be lost sight of that Al-Zuhrî's account is very much continuous and that even with the divisions introduced on purpose by Watt the existence of the prepositions *fa*, *thumma* and *fa* with the verbs that follow the sentence فجاءه الحق (*fajâ'ahu al-haqq*) shows that it is the same entity, Jibrîl, who is spoken of throughout and who is mentioned by name at the end. The sequence of the description as well as grammatical rules require that Jibrîl should be taken as the subject of the verb فأتاه (*fa-'atâhu*) with which the narration starts here and which Watt omits from his translation.

The third thing to note in this connection is the relation of the sentence فجاءه الحق (*faja'ahu al-haqq*), "Suddenly the truth came to him", with what follows in the text, as well as the meaning of the expression *al-haqq* (الحق). It may be recalled that the expression in the other versions of the account is *fajâ'ahu al-haqq* (فجاءه الحق),i.e., "Then the truth came to him". There is, however, little difference in the sense in either form. What follows in the text is of course a description of how "the truth" came to the Prophet; but neither does *al-haqq* mean here God, nor is it, as shown above, the subject of the verbs that occur in the description which follows. Watt puts the meaning of God upon the expression because, according to him, "this is a way of referring to God."[2] His reasoning itself betrays an admission that there are other senses in which the expression is used. Indeed, it occurs more than 260 times in the Qur'ân in more than 20 different senses.[3] Nowhere in the Qur'ân, however, does *al-haqq* appear independently to denote God. It is only at some 9 places that it comes as an attribute of God, but always along with the mention of Allah or *rabb*, such as at 20:114 and 23:116 ﴿فتعالى الله الملك الحق﴾;

1. *Ibid.* p.45.
2. *Ibid.*, p.42.
3. See for instance Muhammad 'Abd al-Rahmân al-Râwî, *Kalimat al-Haqq Fî-al-Qur'ân*, 2 Vols., Imam Muhammad University, Riyadh, 1409 H.

﴿أن الله هو الحق﴾ 24:25 ; ﴿فذ'لكم الله ربكم الحق﴾ 10:32; ﴿وردوا إلى الله مولـٰهم الحق﴾ 10:30 etc.[1] On the other hand, it has been used in the sense of Qur'ânic *waḥy* more than fifty times,[2] being the largest single majority of instances in which it has been used in a particular sense; and that also almost always with the verb *jâ'a* (جاء). Some of the instances are as follows:

(a) ﴿فلما جاءهم الحق من عندنا قالوا إن هذا لسحر مبين﴾ (١٠:٧٦) "When *al-ḥaqq* came to them from Us they said: this is indeed evident sorcery."(10:76)

(b) ﴿لقد جآءك الحق من ربك فلا تكونن من الممترين﴾ (١٠:٩٤) "*Al-ḥaqq* has indeed come to you from your Lord. So be in no wise of those in doubt." (10:94)

(c) ﴿فلما جآءهم الحق من عندنا قالوا لولآ أُوتيَ مثل مآ أُوتيَ موسىٰ﴾ (٢٨:٤٨)

"But when *al-ḥaqq* has come to them from Ourselves, they say: why is he not given the like of what Mûsâ was given?" (28:48)

(d) ﴿بل متعت هـٰـؤلآء وءابآءهم حتى جآءهم الحق ورسول مبين﴾ (٤٣:٢٩)

"Rather I have given good things to these people and their ancestors, till *al-ḥaqq* has come to them, and a Messenger making things clear." (43:29)

(e) ﴿ولما جآءهم الحق قالوا هـٰـذا سحر وإنا به كـٰـفرون﴾ (٤٣:٣٠)

"And when *al-ḥaqq* came to them they said, 'this is sorcery and we reject it." (43:30)

(f) ﴿الذى أنزل إليك من ربك هو الحق﴾ (٣٤:٦) "And that which has been sent down to you from your Lord is *al-ḥaqq*"(34:6)

(g) ﴿والذى أوحينآ إليك من الكتـٰـب هو الحق....﴾ (٣٥:٣١)

"And that which We have communicated to you of the Book is *al-ḥaqq*" (35:31)

Thus a reference to the Qur'ân (as well as to the traditions) makes it clear that the most frequent use of *al-ḥaqq* is in the sense of Qur'ânic *waḥy* and that the term, though undoubtedly an attribute of God, has never been used independently to denote God. The expression فجاه الحق or فجاءه الحق in the account under discussion therefore means the coming of *waḥy* and not, as Watt would have us believe, the appearance of God before the Prophet.

Having attempted to show from Al-Zuhrî's account and *sûrat al-Najm* that the Prophet claimed to have a "vision"of Allah, Watt proceeds to state that if this was "Muḥammad's original interpretation of the vision, it could

1. The other places are Q. 18:44; 31:39; 22:6 and 22:62.

2. These are Q. 2:26; 2:42; 2:91; 2:109; 2:144; 2:146; 2:147; 2:149; 3:60; 3:71; 4:170; 5:48; 5:87; 6:5; 6:114; 7:43; 7:53; 8:6; 8:32; 9:48; 10:76; 10:77; 10:94; 10:108; 11:17; 11:120; 13:1; 13:19; 16:102; 17:56; 17:81; 22:54; 23:70; 28:48; 28:53; 29:68; 32:3; 34:6; 34:43; 34:49; 35:24; 35:31; 37:37; 40:5; 43:29; 43:30; 43:78; 46:7; 50:5; 57:16; 60:1. = 52 times.

hardly have been his final one, for it contradicts 6:103 which says 'sight reacheth not Him." In this connection Watt refers also to *'âyah* 11 of the *sûrat al-Najm* which he quotes in Bell's translation as "the heart did not falsify what it saw" and states that this *'âyah* was "perhaps added later."[1] One may easily detect that here Watt is merely reproducing Bell's views that Muḥammad (ﷺ) first claimed to have seen Allah and then, as he realized his mistake, modified his position and introduced the *'âyah* in the *sûrah* to give an impression of a spiritual or mental vision.[2] The premises on which these assumptions are based have already been examined and shown to be untenable.[3] It may once again be emphasized that neither Al-Zuhrî's account nor *sûrat al-Najm* speaks of "vision of Allah", so that there is no question of contradiction with another Qur'ânic passage such as 6:103, nor of modification in subsequent *'âyah's* of *sûrat al-Najm*. The "vision of Allah" is a groundless surmise, on which is based a further incorrect assumption of contradiction and a still further conjecture of modification, all of which are wrong and untenable.

It may be recalled[4] that *'âyah* 18 of *sûrat al-Najm*, which speaks of the Prophet's having seen with his eyes (*baṣar*) "one of the greatest signs of his Lord," runs counter to the theory of a mental or spiritual vision as also of a vision of God. Bell silently passes over this *'âyah* when he presents his theory. Watt, however, undertakes to fill this lacuna in Bell's presentation and attempts to bring the *'âyah* in line with the theory of a spiritual vision. Hence, referring to the *'âyah* he observes that this "might be taken to mean that what Muḥammad had seen was a sign or symbol of the glory and majesty of God". He then relates it to *'âyah* 11 ("the heart did not falsify what it saw") and says that this suggests "that while the eyes perceived the sign or symbol, the heart perceived the thing symbolized." Thus, continues Watt, though Muḥammad's (ﷺ) original interpretation of the "vision as a direct vision of God" was "not quite accurate, in essentials he was not mistaken. Perhaps the verse ought to be translated: 'the heart was not mistaken in respect of what he, the man saw'."[5]

1. Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, p.43.
2. *Supra*, pp.439-446.
3. *Supra*, pp.441-444.
4. See *supra*, pp.440-441.
5. Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, p.43.

The above remarks are clearly based on the fautly assumption that the Prophet had "originally interpreted the vision as a direct vision of God". He did *not* do so; nor does the passage of *sûrat al-Najm* bear that meaning. Hence there is no conflict between the *'âyahs* of the *sûrah* and therefore no need to advance such an interpretation as would bring them into agreement. The interpretation is in fact an unwarranted twist in the meaning of *'âyah* 11, for Watt says: "while the eyes perceived the sign or symbol, the heart perceived the thing symbolized", that is God. The *'âyah* in no way suggests that the eyes perceived one thing, that is a sign of God, and the heart saw or perceived another thing, that is God. The plain meaning of the *'âyah* is that the heart and the eyes were in unison — it was no mistake of the heart, that is, no mistaken impression of his (the Prophet's) about what he saw with his eyes. "The heart was not mistaken", as Watt translates it alternatively, "in respect of what he, the man saw". The whole emphasis is on the very antithesis of a mental or spiritual vision.

Watt's aim in giving this twist in the sense is, as he plainly states, "to avoid making it a vision of Gabriel, which would be unhistorical, and also to avoid contradicting the view of Islamic orthodoxy that Muḥammad had not seen God"[1]. The question arises: why this eagerness to prove that it was not Jibrîl who appeared before the Prophet, if the clear meaning of the passage of *sûrat al-Najm* is, as Watt and Bell would have us believe, that Muḥammad (ﷺ) originally mistook it to be a direct vision of God and subsequently rectified the mistake by giving the impression of a mental vision? Watt's avowed object rather betrays an awareness on his part of the fact that the interpretation he puts on the passage of *sûrat al-Najm* is not quite its plain meaning. Also the reason given, namely, that a vision of Jibrîl "would be unhistorical", is clearly based on the old plea that Jibrîl is not mentioned by name in the Makkan passages of the Qur'ân. That plea has already been shown to be untenable and incorrect.[2] The plea is also inconsistent on Watt's part; for, unlike Bell, he does not seem to hold the view that traditions should not be brought into consideration in this connection. Watt recognizes that there is clear mention of Jibrîl in Al-Zuhrî's report, particularly in what he puts in his passages D and I. Watt gets rid of these passages by observing that the mention of Jibrîl therein is suspicious, thus implying that those parts

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Supra*, pp.443-448.

of the report have been tampered with by subsequent narrators. The implication is also inconsistent with the very ground on which he prefers this version of Al-Zuhrî's report, namely, that it has not been rewritten as has Ibn Hishâm's been. If subsequent reporters had modified those portions of the report, they would have modified also its initial part where the coming of the truth is mentioned. For, according to Watt, that means the appearance of God before the Prophet and that is contrary to what he calls the Islamic orthodoxy. The fact is that neither those parts of the report that mention Jibrîl are later interpolations, nor does the coming of the truth mean the appearance of God. It may also be recalled that the passage of *sûrat al-Najm* is not the only Qur'ânic information regarding the coming of *waḥy* to the Prophet and that the passage should be understood in combination with similar passages in the Qur'ân, particularly 81:19-23, as explained earlier.[1]

Watt is of course aware of the existence of other Qur'ânic passages in this respect. Before noticing how he deals with them it is necessary to refer to the second motive in his above mentioned interpretation of the passage of *sûrat al-Najm*, namely, as he says, "to avoid contradicting the view of Islamic orthodoxy that Muḥammad had not seen God". Any reader who has gone through the previous chapter of the present work would at once recognize that this statement of Watt's is based on the totally groundless assumption of Bell that the so-called orthodox Islamic belief in this respect was a development subsequent to the time of the Prophet and that it is at variance with what Bell thinks the Qur'ânic testimony to the effect that Muḥammad (ﷺ) had originally claimed to have seen Allah. The question thus once again turns upon the interpretation of the passage of *sûrat al-Najm*, and once again it should be pointed out that the interpretation given by Bell and Watt is wrong.

Watt, as already indicated, is aware of the existence of other Qur'ânic passages bearing on the meaning of the passage of *sûrat al-Najm*. But he disposes of them by invoking the opinion of Karl Ahrens who says that there is no mention of Jibrîl in the Makkan passages of the Qur'ân, that the *rasûl karîm* of 81:19 was originally identified with *al-rûḥ*, and that angels are mentioned in the Makkan passages in the plural only. Watt also calls attention in this connection to 26:193: "with which hath come down the Faithful Spirit" and says that this "would fit in with the view here developed",[2] that is, the

1. *Supra*, pp.420-422, 439-440.
2. Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, p.43.

view that the Prophet had a spiritual vision of God.

Karl Ahrens is right in saying that the *rasûl karîm* of 81:19 is identifiable with *al-rûḥ* (as in 97:4); but it is not correct that *al-rûḥ* or *al-rûḥ al-'amîn* (the faithful spirit) is other than Jibrîl or that it fits in with the view of a spiritual vision of God. Nor is it correct that angels are mentioned only in the plural in the Makkan passages of the Qur'ân.[1]

Let us now consider the three Qur'ânic passages cited here (i.e., 81:19; 97;4 and 26:193). As regards the first passage,[2] four points need to be noted carefully. (a) The *rasûl karîm* here is mentioned specifically as conveyer of the Qur'ânic *waḥy*. (b) The very fact that he is described as a *noble messenger* militates against his being identical with God; he is simply His messenger. (c) The same nature of his is emphasized in the immediately following *'âyah* (81:20) wherein it is said that he has his position "near the Lord of the Throne". That means he is not in any way to be confused with the "Lord of the Throne" (God). It is further stated in this *'âyaḥ* that he is "possessor of strength" (ذي قوة). The similarity of this phrase with the description "strong in power" (شديد القوى) in *sûrat al-Najm* is remarkable. (d) He is described in the next *'âyah* (81:21) as "one obeyed" (مطاع) and "faithful" (أمين). As he is not the Lord of the Throne, the expression "one obeyed" must have reference to the others like him who obeyed him, i.e., he has only a position of primacy among his compeers. In other words, he is someone "special" among a group of similar beings. It is also noteworthy that the description *'amîn* is strikingly the same as given to *al-ruḥ* in 26:193 —"the faithful spirit". Karl Ahrens, and with him Watt, agree in saying that the *rasûl karîm* of 81:19 is identifiable with *al-rûḥ*. Thus by the internal evidence of the passage 81:19 ff and by their admission the *rasûl karîm* is the same *as al-rûḥ al-'amîn* and he is different from God and is, moreover, a conveyer of *waḥy*.

As regards the second passage, namely 97:4, the expression here is of course simply *al-rûḥ* along with *al-malâ'ikah* (the angels). Karl Ahrens and Watt seem to imply that *al-rûḥ* is different in nature from *al-malâ'ikah*; but that is not correct. It is a recognized style in Arabic language to mention the special one (*khâṣ*) separately from a general body of a particular group when they are to be mentioned together. Instances of such mention of the *khâṣ*

1. See for instance 6:8, 9, 50; 11:12, 31; 12:31; 25:7; 32:11; 53:26: 17:95 and 69:178.
2. See also *supra*, pp. 418-421,439-442.

separately along with the general body (*'âm*) are numerous in Arabic literature. But apart from this rule of the language, the internal evidence of the passage clearly marks out *al-rûḥ* to be different from God: for the sentence says that the angels (*al-malâ'ikah*) and *al-rûḥ* come down "by permission of their Lord" (بإذن ربهم). Therefore the Lord of both the angels and *al-rûḥ* is different. Clearly *al-rûḥ* here is not identical with the Lord. And as he is mentioned specially along with the angels, he and they all coming down by permission of *their* Lord, the unavoidable meaning is that he, *al-rûḥ*, is a special one of them. And since the *rasûl karîm* in 81:19 is marked out as a special one and as the conveyer of *waḥy*, and since both Karl Ahrens and Watt agree in saying that the *rasûl karîm* is identical with *al-rûḥ*, he is the same being who brings *waḥy* and who is an angel. The identification of the *rasûl karîm* as an angel is supported by 35:1 which speaks of Allah's employing messengers (*rusul*) from among the angels. It is to be noted that while the reference here is to the taking of angels as messengers in general, it is only a particular *messenger* in the singular who is always spoken of as the conveyer of *waḥy*.

Similarly the third passage (26:193) clearly mentions "the faithful spirit" as the one who brings down *waḥy* (نزل به الروح الأمين). For the same reasons as stated above this *al-rûḥ al-'amîn* is the same as the *rasûl karîm*, who is also described as *'amîn* (faithful) and as the conveyer of *waḥy*. The internal evidence here also distinguishes *al-rûḥ al-'amîn* from God. For, in the previous *'âyah*, 26:192, the Qur'ân (or Qur'ânic *waḥy*) is spoken of as *tanzîl* i.e., something sent down, by the Lord of all the worlds. The causative nature of the expression (*tanzîl*) shows that God sent it down, not that He came down with it. The succeeding *'âyah*, 26:193, clarifies the position further and says that it is *al-rûḥ al-*'amin who came down with it.

Thus the *rasûl karîm* and *al-rûḥ al-'amîn*, both of whom are mentioned as the conveyer of *waḥy*, are one and the same individual. That he is an angel is shown by (a) the mention of *al-rûḥ* along with angels as a special one among them (70:4; 78:38 & 97:4); (b) the mention of angels as having been employed as messengers by God (35:1); (c) the mention of the conveyer of *waḥy* as a *noble messenger*, i.e., a special one from among the angels who are taken as messengers; (d) the specific mention of him by name, Jibrîl, as the conveyer of *waḥy* in 2:97 and (e) the mention of him by name in the traditions also as the conveyer of *waḥy*.

The name Jirbîl of course occurs only three times in the Madinan passages of the Qur'ân; but that does not mean that there is no reference to him in the Makkan passages. Nor that someone else is spoken of as the conveyer of *waḥy* in the Makkan passages. For one thing, the expressions *al-rûḥ* or *al-rûḥ al-'amîn*, not to speak of the *rasûl karîm*, can by on stretch of the imagination be taken in the Christian sense of the Spirit or Holy Spirit, which is what Watt seems to suggest. The expressions *al-rûḥ*, *al-rûḥ al-'amîn* and *rûḥ al-qudus* occur some 21 times in the Qur'ân.[1] In none of the places it is used in the sense of God or His attribute. In six out of the 21 places it is used in connection with 'Îsâ and his mother Maryam;[2] but at each of these places it has the meaning of either the spirit of life or the angel (Jibrîl). In any case, at none of these places is the word coterminous with the Divine Being, for the unmistakable tenor and purport of each of the passages is to contradict the concept of the Trinity or to deny the supposed divinity of 'Îsâ.[3]

III. "THE VISIT TO ḤIRÂ'; TAḤANNUTH"

After presenting his views about what he calls "Muḥammad's visions" Watt passes on to the second sub-title: *The visit to Ḥirâ'; taḥannuth*. It must not be supposed that the subject of the "visions" is left behind. It indeed forms a constant theme in all the sections, and Watt's aim is all along to suggest that the "vision", indeed *waḥy*, is something mental, psychological or psycho-intellectual in nature.

As regards the visit to Ḥirâ' and *taḥannuth* Watt differs from his preceptor Bell who denies the authenticity of the report about them. Watt says that there "is no improbability in Muḥammad's going to Ḥirâ'".[4] He then presents what one scholar very aptly calls "a compound version of the views" of others.[5] Watt states that Muḥammad's (ﷺ) going to Ḥirâ' "might be a method of escaping from the heat of Mecca in an unpleasant season for those who could not afford to go to at-Ṭâ'if". Having said that Watt adds immedi-

1. These places are: Q. 2:87; 2:253; 4:171; 5:110; 16:2; 16:102; 17:85 (two times); 26:193; 40:15; 58:22; 70:4; 78:38; 97:4; 42:51; 19:17; 21:91; 66:12; 32:9; 15:29 and 38:72.

2. These are: Q. 2:87; 2:253; 4:171; 5:113; 21:91; 66:12.

3. See for a detailed discussion on *rûḥ* Ibn al-Qayyim, *Kitâb al-Rûḥ*, Hyderabad, 1324 H. See also its summary in M.W., 1935, pp. 129-144. Cf. D.B. Macdonald, "The development of the idea of spirit in Islam", *M.W.*, 1932, pp.25-42 and 153-168.

4. Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, p.44.

5. See M.J. Kister, "*Al-Taḥannuth*: An Enquiry into the meaning of a term", *B.S.O.A.S.*, Vol. XXXI, 1968, p. 229.

ately: "Judaeo-Christian influence, such as the example of monks, or a little personal experience" would have shown Muḥammad (ﷺ) "the need and desirability of solitude".[1]

The two consecutive sentences quoted above in fact represent two different views. The first view, that the resort to Ḥirâ' was something of a poor man's summer holiday was first suggested by Aloy Sprenger in the mid-nineteenth century.[2] Ever since he made that suggestion, however, no European writer of note adopted that view or treated it as a reasonable explanation of the affair. Watt, however, adopts and reproduces it, without referring to Sprenger in any way. Neither Sprenger nor Watt asks himself the very pertinent questions whether the climate of Ḥirâ' differs in any way from that of the town of Makka in the summer and why, of all the neighbouring hills, should Ḥirâ' in particular have been chosen as the supposed summer resort? If they had asked themselves these preliminary questions about the geography of Makka they would surely have given a second thought to this novel suggestion of theirs.

The second view, that of Judaeo-Christian influence, specially the instance of Christian monks, suggesting "the need and desirability of solitude", is indeed the suggestion of a number of Watt's predecessors, notably J. Herschfield[3] and Tor Andrae.[4] Watt does not, however, refer to either of them in this connection. The unsoundness of the general assumption of Judaeo-Christian influence upon the evolution of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) thought has been noted earlier.[5] It may be observed here, however, that the two views thus put forth in the two consecutive sentences are incompatible. If the retirement at Ḥirâ' was a sort of a summer holiday, there is no need to invoke Judaeo-Christian influence in the matter. If, on the other hand, it was done in imitation of the practice of the Christian monks, the theory of summer holiday is both unnecessary and irrelevant.

After having made the above noted remarks about the retirement at Ḥirâ' Watt refers to the origin and meaning of the term *taḥannuth*. In this he generally follows what Bell and Herschfield suggest, namely, that the term means

1. Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, p.44.
2. A. Sprenger, *Das Leben und die Lehre des Mohammed*, I, Berlin, 1860, pp.295-296.
3. H. Herschfield, *New Researches into the composition and exigecies of the Qoran*, London, 1902, p.19.
4. Tor Andrae, *Mohammed, Sein Leben und Glaube*, Gottingen 1832, pp.34-35.
5. *Supra*, chapter XI.

either prayer for God's favour or "doing some work to escape from sin or crime". Watt then proceeds to "fill out hypothetically", as he says, the account of what actually transpired. He says that Muḥammad (ﷺ) had from an early age been aware of the social and religious problems of Makka. His being an orphan made him all the more alive to those problems. He also imbibed the "vague monotheism found among the most enlightened Makkans". He also looked for some reform "and all the circumstances suggested that this reform must be primarily religious". In this state of mind he "deliberately sought solitude to reflect on Divine things and to perform some acts of worship, perhaps an expiation for sins".[1]

Watt thus in effect himself nullifies what he says previously about summer holidaying by Muḥammad (ﷺ) and his possible imitaion of the practice of the Christian monks. For, if he looked for some kind of reform in Makka and if "all the circumstances suggested that this reform must be primarily religious" and therefore he "deliberately sought solitude to reflect on Divine things" etc., both the surmises are unnecessary to explain his solitary retirement to Ḥirâ'. Watt's remarks here are, however, based on two distinct suggestions made by his predecessors, notably by Muir and Margoliouth. The one is the suggestion of ambition and preparation on Muḥammad's (ﷺ) part to play the role of a prophet-reformer.[2] The other is the theory that the political, religious and cultural situation in Arabia and the neighbouring Christian Byzantine state suggested that the contemplated reform should take on a religious character and that therefore Muḥammad (ﷺ) decided to assume the role of a prophet. Also the remark that in his retirment he probably performed some act in "expiation for sins" is reminiscent of the Muir-Margoliouth-Watt views about his previous religious beliefs and practices.[3]

All these themes have already been dealt with. The Prophet did of course retire into the cave of Ḥirâ' to reflect on Divine things; but there is no indication in the sources that he did so for discovering a framework for his contemplated socio-religious reform. Watt's story, as he himself points out, is hypothetical and, as we have pointed out, based in essence on the views of his predecessors. Whatever the Prophet's motive in seeking solitude at Ḥirâ', the coming of the revelation to him was by all accounts something sudden

1. Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, p. 44.
2. See *supra*, chapter X.
3. *Supra*, chapter VIII, sec. IV.

and unexpected. His bewilderment at what happened at Ḥirâ' and the subsequent consultation with Waraqah ibn Nawfal only emphasize this unexpectedness and unpreparedness on his part. These facts thus run directly counter to the assumption of contemplated reform, indeed of ambition and preparation. In order to sustain the theory of contemplated reform it is necessary therefore to dismantle the fact of the suddenness of the affair, or at least to create doubt about it. This is exactly what Watt seems to aim at. Thus immediately after having hypothetically filled out the account he observes that though the traditional accounts "suggest that the visions came during the retreat", the "comparative dates of the different features of Muḥammad's call are uncertain. Sometimes the appearance is said to be unexpected, and sometimes Khadîjah seems to have been not far away".[1]

It should at once be pointed out that whatever may be the uncertainty about what is called "the comparative dates of the different features" of the call, there is no uncertainty whatsoever about the order of its main features, nor about its suddenness and unexpectedness. By all the accounts the "call" took place in the wake of the retirement at Ḥirâ' and the "appearance" or the "vision" was a simultaneous, indeed an inseparable feature of the call. Whether Khadîjah was near the Prophet at Ḥirâ', as stated in one of the reports reproduced by Ibn Isḥâq, or the Prophet was at home near her, as said in the version of Al-Zuhrî's report quoted by Watt, the "appearance" [of Jibrîl] was in every case sudden and unexpected. It is *not* "sometimes" that "the appearance is said to be unexpected"; it is always so in the reports. The emphasis on the suddenness and unexpectedness of the "call" and the "vision" is constant throughout all the reports in all their versions, despite their differences in matters of detail. Watt himself uses this sudden appearance of "the truth", as we have seen just a little while ago, to support his assumption of the "vision of God". But now he realizes that the facts of the suddenness of the "call" and the "vision", and the consequent bewilderment and uncertainty on the Prophet's part are strongly against the theory of his plans and contemplation for socio-religious reforms. Hence Watt now attempts to create doubt about the suddenness of the "call" and to show that it was something independent of the "vision". In fact, in the remaining sections of his discussions on the subject Watt isolates the "vision" from the "call" and suggests that the Prophet, though he was unceratin about his position, nonetheless continued

1. Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, p.44.

to receive revelations and to give them out to the public for about three years when, after the period of *fatrah* and that of "secret" preaching he saw the "visions" or the first "vision".[1]

IV. "THOU ART THE MESSENGER OF GOD"

Watt thus takes up the subjects of "the call" and the "visions" under his above mentioned third sub-title. He starts by saying that in B,C, D and I of "the passages from az-Zuhrî" the words "Thou art the Messenger of God" occur four times —in the first the speaker is "the Truth", in the second "merely 'he'" and in the last two Jibrîl. He then says that the circumstances are different in the four passages and raises the question whether these are "four versions of one event, that somehow or other have developed different features?" Watt observes that the mention of Jibrîl "at this early stage" is "suspicious", since he "is not mentioned in the Qur'ân until much later" and adds that the "experiences" described in the passages belong to two types—those in the first two (B & C) describe Muḥammad's (ﷺ) "original call to be a Messenger", and those in the other two (D & I) "appear to be reaffirmation of this to assure him in a time of anxiety".[2]

It is to be noted once again that what Watt calls "the passages from az-Zuhrî" are in fact passages made by Watt out of Al-Zuhrî's rather continuous account. By making such divisions in the text Watt has thought, or attempted to show that the "speakers" in the passages B through D and further on are different. As stated above, neither the context, nor the rules of grammar support this assumption. The speaker is throughout Jibrîl. Similarly the plea that the mention of Jibrîl at this stage is suspicious because he is not mentioned in the Qur'ân until much later is also untenable. It is also inconsistent with Watt's own approach; for he reproduces only Al-Ṭabari's version of Al-Zuhrî's report to the exclusion of all the other versions on the ground that it has not been "rewritten", i.e., modified by others. His now casting doubt on part of this version and, indeed, his reliance on the Qur'ânic evidence only regarding Jibrîl, which he also misconceives, is glaringly inconsistent.

Watt's purpose is, however, to isolate "the call" from the "vision". Hence, immediately after having made the above mentioned statements he begins another paragraph by asking: "If B refers to the original call, what is its relation to the visions?" The question is clearly confusing. The passage B, as

1. See below, text.
2. Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, p.45.

Watt has hitherto said, describes the "appearance" or the "vision" and he has attempted to suggest a little while ago that "the truth" mentioned in it should be understood in the sense of God. But now he slips away from that position and attempts to suggest that the passage only describes the original call to be a Messenger, implying that this is totally different from the "vision" so that the relationship between the two should be determined. It should at once be pointed out that what he calls a description of the "original call" is nothing but what happened in the "vision" described in the passage B. His question thus really amounts to a queer one, namely, "What is the relation of the vision to the vision?"

After putting the above mentioned question Watt refers to the passage of *sûrat al-Najm* and reiterates in effect what Bell says in this connection, namely, that the description of "the first vision" in that *sûrah* was given out in response to the Makkan unbelievers' objections to the genuineness of the revelations and that therefore at least one or several revealtions had been proclaimed before the narration of the vision in that *sûrah*. Watt says further that the vision which was narrated "must have something to do" with the reciept of revelations; yet, "there is nothing to show that the receiving of specific passages accompanied the vision..."[1]

In making this last statement Watt obviously changes his ground again, and that in two ways. He slips away from the Qur'ânic evidence and seems to concentrate only on the evidence of the report he cites. Secondly, he now also implies that the passage B of the report describes a "vision" but does not mention the delivery of any specific passage. For, otherwise, there is no ground for his making the statement that "there is nothing to show that the receiving of specific passages accompanied the vision".

Now, the text which Watt assigns to the passage B and which he seems to have in view does of course only speak about the entity's addressing Muḥammad (ﷺ) as "thou art the Messenger of God" and does not mention the delivery of any specific Qur'ânic passage. But, as already pointed out, Watt's passages A to G are all continuous in Al-Zuhrî's account as given in Al-Ṭabarî, and the narration up to the end of passage E speaks of the different circumstances attending the "call" and the delivery of the *iqra'* passage. In Watt's own translation the passage E starts thus: "Then he said, Recite. I said, I cannot recite..." The expression "Then he" unmistakably refers to

1. *Ibid.*

Jibrîl who is mentioned in the previous passage D. Watt of course doubts the mention of Jibrîl at this stage; but he (Watt) does not, and cannot, deny that the passage D speaks of an "appearance" or "vision" and that both the passages D and E together speak of a "vision" and the delivery of the *iqra'* passage which, elsewhere, Watt recognizes to be the first Qur'ânic passage to be delivered.[1] Thus his statement that "there is nothing to show that the receiving of specific passages accompanied the vision" is untenable and contrary to the very evidence he relies on.

The statement is contrary also to the Qur'ânic evidence; for whatever may be the view of Bell and Watt about the entity appearing in the "vision" described in *sûrat al-Najm*, it categorically says that it was that entity, the *shadîd al-Quwâ* and *dhû-mirrah*, who drew nearer than "two bow-lengths" and delivered to the Prophet what he was giving out as *waḥy* (*'âyahs* 4-10). The same thing is emphasized in 81:19-23 which says that it was a "saying", a text (*qawl*), which was delivered by "the noble messenger" whom the Prophet had seen in "the clear horizon". Both the passages speak of a past event, and their reference is clearly to the initial *waḥy* which the Prophet had given out to the Makkans and which both the passages emphasize was delivered by the entity he saw.

Also, the other versions of Al-Zuhrî's report, particularly that in *Bukhârî*, clearly speak of the delivery of the *iqra'* passage by Jibrîl who appeared before the Prophet for the purpose. Watt withholds from his readers this and the other versions of the report. In fact by doing so, and by all the other devices, namely, by arbitrarily dividing the version which he cites into so many artificial passages, by isolating "the call" from the "vision", by raising the queer question of their relationship and by making the untenable statement that no specific text was delivered during the vision Watt drives at his and his predecessors' main theory that the Qur'ânic revelation was not verbal but only in the nature of suggestions or ideas that came to the Prophet. Hence he further states that the "practical outcome of the vision" would be something like a "conviction that the passages were messages from God" and that the Prophet "was called upon to proclaim them publicly".[2]

Note the expression: "the passages were messages from God"; that is, the *passages* themselves were not from God, but only their *messages* were so. It

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ibid.* p.45.

is not explained by Watt how the *messages* could have been received prior to the "vision", nor why Muḥammad (ﷺ), before he was sure that they were from God, should have formulated them into "passages". Nor does Watt mention any such pre-vision passage. He simply argues backward from his assumption, namely, that since the "vision" imparted a "conviction that the passages were messages from God", this "would presuppose that Muḥammad had already received some revelations" but had not been sure about their nature; "now he is informed or given an assurance about that".[1] One may easily detect that this is merely a repetition in another form of the Muir-Margoliouth-Bell theory of the Prophet's having received other Qur'ânic revelaions prior to the *iqra'* passage and that he subsequently thought those were from God.

"Alternatively", continues Watt, "the vision might be taken as a call to seek revelations, and Muḥammad may have known something about methods of inducing them". The theory of "inducing" of revelations, it may be recalled, is originaly Margoliouth's.[2] He of course relates it to the physical hardships and other symptoms that at times attended the coming of revelations to the Prophet. Watt does not refer to Margoliouth and introduces the allegation at the first opportunity, that of the beginning of the "call" and the "vision", with the absurd implication that Muḥammad (ﷺ), before he hardly began his mission, had already "known something about methods of inducing" revelations!

Watt does not, however, press this suggestion here; for, as we shall see presently, he would revert to it subsequently.[3] After having simply introduced the allegation he observes that "the former of the alternatives", that is, the outcome of the vision being only a conviction that the "passages" were "messages" from God, "is more probable"; for it is in line with the view, and here Watt specifically cites Bell, "that what was inspired or suggested to him was the practical line of conduct' which he in fact followed".[4] It may at once be pointed out that it is not only this particular expression, but the whole theory that the Qur'ânic *waḥy* does not mean verbal communication of a text, but "suggestion", or "inspiration", etc., which is Bell's and others' and which Watt simply undertakes to substantiate by some means or other. So far as

1. *Ibid.*
2. See *supra*, p. 411.
3. *Infra*, pp. 498-500.
4. Watt, op. cit., p. 45.

this particular view is concerned, however, its untenability has been demonstrated earlier.[1]

Watt finally says that if "the purport of the vision was something general", that would agree with passage B. He then says that the words "Thou art the Messenger of God" were probably "not an exterior locution", nor even "an imaginative locution, but an intellectual locution", meaning that it was a "communication" which was made "without words. The form of words may even be much later than the actual vision".[2]

These statements in fact constitute an admission on Watt's part that the "original call" and the "vision" are not really two distinct events, as he has hitherto implied, but are aspects of the same incident described in passage B. Having recognized that he realizes that the expression "Thou art the Messenger of God", though not a passage of the Qur'ân, nonetheless consists of "words" constituting a statement which was communicated to the Prophet during the "vision" described in passage B. Hence Watt hastens to say that these words were probably "an intellectual locution". Now observe his peculiar logic. He asserts that there is nothing to show that the communication of any specific text accompanied the "vision"; but now that he cannot deny that the passage B, which he has isolated from the rest of the account, also speaks of the communication of some "words", Hence he tells his readers that these "words" were communicated "without words"— an intellectual locution! The fact is that his statement that the communication of no specific text accompanied the "vision" is belied and contradicted even by his passage B. Moreover, by saying that the "form of the words may even be much later than the actual vision" he makes an arbitrary assumption which is nowhere warranted by the sources, neither directly, nor indirectly. In doing so he also casts doubt on the authenticity of passage B. As we have seen, he casts doubt on passages D and I because they mention Jibrîl which fact does not fit in with his assumption. Now he implies incorrectness even in passage B because there is the mention of the communication of the words "Thou art the Messenger of God", which fact contradicts his other assumption. Yet he would have us believe that his assumptions are supported by these very passages!

Even after such manoeuvres Watt cannot escape the fact that the *iqra'*

1. See *supra*, pp. 430-339.

2. Watt, *op. cit.*, p. 456. He refers here to the work of A. Poulain and to section 5 where the expression "intellectual locution", etc., are explained.

passage, including his passages D & E, was by all accounts communicated during a "vision". Hence he proceeds to deal with it under his fourth sub-heading which is as follows:

V: "RECITE"

Under this sub-heading Watt attempts to make three points in three successive paragraphs. In the first he refers to the "numerous versions of the tradition" regarding the revelation of *sûrat al-'alaq* and then, with reference to Al-Zuhrî's account, he says that the words *mâ aqra'u* occurring therein "must be translated 'I cannot read (or recite)"'; for there is the variant, *mâ 'anâ bi-qâri'in* in other versions and because, also, Ibn Hishâm makes a distinction between *mâ 'aqra'u* and *mâ dhâ 'aqra'u,* the latter expression meaning "Watt shall I recite?". Having said this Watt asserts: "This latter is also the more natural meaning for *mâ 'aqra'u.*" In support of this statement he levels an allegation against the traditionists in general saying: "It is almost certain that the latter traditionists avoided the natural meaning of the words" in order to sustain the "dogma that Muḥammad could not write, which was an important part of the proof of the miraculous nature of the Qur'ân."[1] He also cites 'Abd Allah ibn Shaddâd's report given in Al-Ṭabarî's *tafsir*,[2] saying that that "text requires that the *mâ* be taken as 'what', since it is preceded by 'and'."

Watt then reproduces in the second paragraph Bell's view that the words *qara'a* and *qur'ân* are taken from the religious vocabulary of the Syrian Christians and that *Qur'ân* means "reading" and "Scripture lesson".[3] Having said this Watt adds that while the verb *'iqra'* "later came to mean 'read, in this sûrah it presumably means 'recite from memory', namely, from the memory of what had been supernaturally communicated to him."[4]

Then, in the last paragraph of his text under this sub-heading Watt says that there "are no effective objections to the almost universal view of Muslim scholars that this is the first of the Qur'ân to be revealed." He then interprets this passage as "a command to worship" and, differing from Bell (who says that the passage was revealed when the Prophet had already gathered some followers) says that "it may very well belong to a stage before he began to preach to others." Nevertheless, insists Watt, the "possibility cannot be

1. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, p. 47, citing Bell, *Origin etc.*, 90 ff.
4. Watt, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

excluded" that the Prophet "had already received other messages which he did not regard as part of the Qur'ân; one example would be the words in the traditions "Thou art the Messenger of God'."[1]

Now, as regards the first point, it is clear that all that Watt says in this connection is intended to discredit the fact that the Prophet could not read or write. The question of his illiteracy and the orientalists' views about it have already been discussed.[2] It may only be pointed out here that the allegation of the later traditionists' having avoided what is called the "natural meaning" of the words *mâ 'aqra'u* is totally unwarranted. Nor is it a fact that the so-called "dogma" about the Prophet's illiteracy is a later development. The Qur'ân itself states:

﴿وما كنت تتلوا من قبله من كتـــب ولا تخطه بيمينك إذًا لأرتاب المبطلون﴾

"You were not used before this (i.e.the giving out of the Qur'ân) to reading any book, nor to writing it with your right hand. In that case the detractors could have reason for doubting." (29:48).

What is called the "dogma" about the Prophet's illiteracy is thus based on this and similar other Qur'ânic statements and is *not* a later invention. Also, it is not true to say that the later traditionists avoided the so-called natural meaning of the words. Many of them indeed considered the different versions and the differences in the meanings of the expressions. Watt's insistence on what he calls the natural meaning of the words seems to have arisen from a confusion about the negative *mâ* and interrogative *mâ* in two versions.

What Watt says in his first paragraph is in fact rendered irrelevant by what he says in his second paragraph dealing with the origin and meaning of *'iqra'*. We need not dilate here on the question whether the expressions *iqra'* and Qur'ân are derived from the religious vocabulary of the Syrian Christians. Even according to Bell, whom Watt quotes, Qur'ân means "reading" or "Scripture lesson". But if, as Watt would have us believe, the verb *iqra'* only "later came to mean 'read'", and if in this passage of *sûrat al-'alaq* it is only a command to the Prophet to "recite from memory" what "had been communicated to him supernaturally", then the whole of Watt's previous remarks about the Prophet's illiteracy and the allegations against the traditionists are both irrelevant and unnecessary; for no reading or writing capacity is called

1. *Ibid.*
2. See *supra*, pp.241-250.

for if the task is simply to recite from memory. Obviously, Watt first assumes the meaning of reading for the verb and on that basis makes his above mentioned comments. He then changes his ground, rejects that meaning for the word and suggests that it only means a command to recite from memory, etc. Once again, he does not explain when and how Muḥammad (ﷺ) received the supernatural communications prior to the communication of the *'iqra'* passage, and what were those supposed pre-*'iqra'* passages or "messages for the passages" that were required to be recited? Clearly, Watt intends here to reiterate the old assumption of the receipt of revelations by the Prophet prior to what is called "the vision".

But once again Watt somewhat contradicts in his third paragraph what he says in the second. He states that there is no effective objections to the view that the *'iqra'* passage was the first part of the Qur'ân to be revealed. A strict adherence to this statement requires the rejection of the suggestion that there were pre-*'iqra'* passages revealed to the Prophet. Watt seems to have recognized the difficulty arising out of this last statement of his. Hence he insists at the end of the paragraph that Muḥammad (ﷺ) had of course "already received other messages which he did not regard as part of the Qur'ân", an example of that being the words "Thou art the Messenger of God".[1] This last statement is simply an attempt to sidetrack the issue. The discussion is here about the receipt of pre-*iqra'* passages or messages for the passages that formed part of the Qur'ân and that the Prophet was supposedly asked in the *'iqra'* passage to recite from memory, and not about what Watt himself recognizes to be no part of the Qur'ân. Moreover, if *waḥy*, as he and his preceptor Bell suggest, was only "inspiration" or "suggestion" for a "practical line of conduct" which the Prophet in fact followed, that could not conceivably be something to be "recited from memory"! The climax of contradiction comes, however, a couple of pages subsequently where Watt states that the "vision" and the address "thou art the Messenger of God" took place some three years *after* the "original call"[2] which, as Watt says here, is described in his passage B of Al-Zuhrî's account!

VI. "SÛRAT AL-MUDDATHTHIR: THE FATRAH"

Watt then passes on to his fifth sub-title. He starts this section by referring to Jâbir ibn 'Abd Allah al-Anṣâri's tradition which says that the opening

1. Watt, *op. cit.*, p. 47.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

'âyahs of *sûrat al-Muddaththir* were the first revelation. Watt states that this could have been so only "if Muḥammad entered abruptly on his public ministry without any period of preparation"; for the passage contains the words "Rise and Warn" whereas the *'iqra'* passage does not contain any such directive and does not therefore "imply a public ministry". He therefore observes that "the most probable view" is that the passage of *sûrat al-Muddaththir* "marks the beginning of public ministry." In support of this statement he cites what Ibn Isḥâq says that the Prophet was ordered after three years of his commission to declare openly what had come to him from God.[1] As another evidence Watt refers to the tradition which says that for the first three years it was the angel "Asrafil" (Isrâfîl) who, in Watt's word, "mediated" the revelation to the Prophet. In this connection Watt refers also to "fatrah or gap in the revelation" and says that "az-Zuhrî introduces the *fatrah* in order to reconcile this tradition with the view that *Sûrat al-'alaq* came first."[2]

The distinction made by Watt between the "non-public ministry" and "public ministry" is clearly based on the distinction made by the Muslim scholars between *nubuwwah* (call to Prophethood) and *risâlah* (commission to preach). Muslim scholarly opinion is also more or less unanimous in saying that the opening passage of *sûrat al-Muddaththir* marks the inception of *risâlah*. But the identification of this distinction with what Ibn Isḥâq says about open preaching and with the Isrâfîl tradition is misleading. Ibn Isḥâq's statement is made not with reference to the distinction between *nubuwwah* and *risâlah* but with reference to what he suggests to be the initial period of unobtrusive or private preaching followed by the period of open preaching. The work of preaching is implied in both the periods. Nor does he relate his statement with the revelation of *sûrat al-Muddaththir* but with two other passages of the Qur'ân.[3] It may be noted that his characterization of the initial period as a period of secret preaching is not based on any specific authority, but on the vague assertion of "what we have come to know" (فيما بلغنا). Both aspects of his statement, namely, the nature of the initial period of preaching and its length need reexamination in the light of the other relevant facts.[4]

Watt makes a mistake in taking Ibn Isḥâq's statement as having been

1. *Ibid.*, p.48. See also Ibn Hishâm. I., p. 262.
2. Watt, *op. cit*, p. 48.
3. The two passages are 15:94 and 26:214.
4. *Infra*, Ch. XXI, sec. I.

made with reference to the distinction between what is called "the non-public ministry" and "public ministry". He seems to realize the difficulty arising out of this identification. Hence he states that "the precise nature of the difference" between the two, that is non-public and public ninistry, "is more difficult to say, since the first converts are said to have been made during the first period." There is in fact no difficulty in the matter. The difficulty is created by Watt's own faulty identification and, to a greater extent, by a careless English rendering of the essentially technical terms *nubuwwah* and *risâlah* as "non-public" and"public ministry." It is to be noted that *nubuwwah* is no "ministry" as such. The use of this term only illustrates the risk involved in transferring Christian theological terms to technical Islamic expressions.

The reference to the Isrâfîl tradition in this conection is also inappropriate. Whatever the tradition in question is worth, it relates neither to the distinction between *nubuwwah* and *risâlah* nor to what is called the period of secret preaching. It is also misleading to state, as Watt does, that the angel Isrâfîl used to "mediate", i.e., deliver, revelation to the Prophet for the first three years of his commission. The text of the tradition simply says that Isrâfîl was "attached" to the Prophet (قُرِن بـ). There is no mention that that angel used to bring any *wahy*. On the contrary it is specifically mentioned that the angel was so attached to the Prophet *prior* to the coming of *wahy* to him (قُرِن برسول الله ﷺ قبل أن يُوحَى إليه).[1] The tradition in question, however, is *mursal*, i.e. its authority does not go upto the time of the Prophet. Al-Waqidî, who also mentions this tradition, categorically states that it is not reliable.[2]

Having thus spoken of the distinction between the "non-public" and "public ministry" Watt deals with the term *al-Muddaththir*. He says that it is commonly taken to meen "wrapped in a *dithâr* (or *dathar*), that is, a cloak" and that it had some connection with the receiving of revelations. As such, he observes, the act of being wrapped "may either be to induce revelations, or, more probably, to protect the human recepient from the danger of the Divine appearance." It must at once be pointed out that in none of the traditions is the act of being wrapped indicated to be what is called a means of "inducing revelations" or "to protect the human recepient from the danger of the Divine appearance". Watt simply twists the term to import in it the theory of "indu-

1. See Al-Ṭabarî, *Târîkh*, I.,1249.
2. Ibn Sa'd, I., p. 191. Also quoted in Al-Ṭabarî, *op. cit.*

cing revelations" and of "the vision of God".

More remarkable is Watt's suggestion about the metaphorical meaning of *al-Muddaththir*. He says that it means "a man who is obscure and of no reputation" and attempts to substantiate this implication by refering to what he calls "the standards by which the rich Meccans judged" the Prophet as "a comparatively unimportant person."[1] The allusion is obviously to Q. 43:31 wherein reference is made to the rich Makkans' attempt to belittle the Prophet when he began to preach the truth to them. True, he was not one of the leaders of his society when "the call" took place; but the term *al-Muddaththir* by no means implies "an obscure person". Nor was he in any way an "obscure" person before "the call". It is common knowledge that a cognate word may acquire a metaphorical sense. The rule in such a case is that the metaphorical meaning is strictly confined to the particular form, and not to any other form or derivative from the root, since the root word does not have that sense. Now, one of the forms derived from *dathâr* is *dathûr* (دثور). This form does sometime bear the sense of an obscure person;[2] but it would be a violence to the rules of the language to transfer that sense to another derivation such as *muddaththir*. In none of the standard Arabic dictionaries is that sense given to this form. Moreover, it is quite contrary to common sense that in the *'âyah* under reference God would address His Messenger in such a derogatory term, or that the Prophet would apply it to himself!

Thus having dealt with the question of "non-public" and "public ministry", the question of *fatrah* and the meanning of *al-muddaththir* Watt summarizes the "picture" as follows. He says that there was "a preparatory stage in Muḥammad's career as prophet, lasting three years." During this period he received the first part of *sûrat al-'Alaq*, *sûrat al-Ḍuḥâ* and other revelations of "a more private character". Watt again refers here to the Israfil tradition. He then says that the *fatrah* might be placed at the end of this period and that then the "visions" or the first of them took place, together with the giving of the title "Messenger of God" and the revelation of *sûrat al-Muddaththir*.[3]

Thus does Watt completely reverse the position with which he started. He started by saying that *al-ru'yâ al-ṣâdiqah* in the pre-Ḥirâ' period was the

1. Watt, *op. cit.*, p.49.
2. See *Tâj al-'Arûs*, III, p. 202.
3. Watt, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

same type of "vision" as that experienced by the Prophet subsequently. Then Watt says that the "vision" at Ḥirâ', which is described in passage B of Al-Zuhrî's account was a "vision of God" because, among other things, there is the mention of *al-ḥaqq* in that connection. Then he states that passage B describes the "original call" and implies that the "vision" was something independent of "the call", taking place subsequently and that its purport was something general, namely, reassuring the Prophet of his new position and imparting to him the conviction that "the passages were messages from God." Yet, on the basis of this supposed purport of the "vision" Watt says that it would "fit in well with passage B", thereby once again implying that the subject-matter of that passage is "the vision" and that it was incidental to "the original call". It is also on that basis that he asserts, a little while ago, that the address "Thou art the Messenger of God" was the sort of non-Qur'ânic revelation which the Prophet had received prior to the receipt of the *'iqra'* passage. And now Watt completely reverses the position saying that even the "first" vision took place after three years of the Prophet's career and that the title Messenger of God was given then, that is, the communication "Thou art the Mseenger of God" took place not before that of the *'iqra'* passage but long *after* it!

These confusions and inconsistencies could easily have been averted if Watt had not set his mind from the start to prove that the so-called "vision" as also *waḥy* were only matters of the Prophet's mind and intellect, for which purpose Watt has divided Al-Zuhrî's rather continuous account into so many artificial passages and, among other devices, has equated *nubuwwah* and *risâlah* with "non-public ministry" and "public ministry", identifying the former with the so-called period of secret preaching mentioned by Ibn Isḥâq and with the dubious period of Isrâfîl's alleged companionship with the Prophet. It is because of this wrong identification that Watt finds it difficult to understand the real nature of what he calls the period of non-public ministry because there were "conversions before Muḥammad publicly claimed to be God's Messenger". And on account of this difficulty of his own creation Watt proceeds to entertain "suspicion that too much is ascribed to the preparatory stage in the traditional accounts."[1] If Watt had not attempetd to misinterpret and "tendentially" shape the sources for the above mentioned purpose he could have seen that despite the variations in the reports "the call"

1. *Ibid.*

and "the vision" took place simultaneously, that the Qur'ânic *waḥy* was verbal communication of specific texts, that the *fatrah* or pause in the coming of *waḥy* was an event of the initial period, that it lasted not for years but only for days or weeks, as he himself appears to recognize,[1] and that the *risâlah* or commission to preach and the revelation of *sûrat al-Muddaththir* and other *sûrahs* took place not very long after the original call. There is thus also no need to be suspicious about the conversions that took place during the first three years or so of the Prophet's career.

VII. 'MUḤAMMAD'S FEAR AND DESPAIR'

Watt next passes on to his sixth sub-title given above. He starts by saying that "the passages from az-Zuhri" speak of two types of fear and despair: "Firstly, fear because of the appearance or presence of the Divine (C, F, J); and despair which led to thoughts of suicide (D,I)."[1]

Before proceeding further with Watt's other statements in this connection it should be observed at the outset that the passages, though they undoubtedly speak about "fear", do in no way speak about "the appearance or presence of the Divine." Passage J, for instance, which Watt cites here as indicating the appearance of the Divine, unequivoccally says, in Watt's own translation, "...I saw the angel who used to come to me at Ḥirâ' on a throne (*kursî*) between the heaven and the earth. I was stricken with fear of him."[2] Therefore it was the sight of the angel, not of the Divine, which caused the fear. It would be manifestly inconsistent to adduce the evidence of the passage in support of the "appearance" or "presence" and then to assume, in disregard of the clear statement of that very passage, that the entity appearing was something else. Secondly, in interpreting the passage of *sûrat al-Najm* Watt states that while Muḥammad's (ﷺ) eyes saw "one of the greatest signs of his Lord", the "heart perceived the thing symbolized". We have pointed out the mistake in this interpretaion; but according to Watt's own admission what the Prophet had seen with his eyes was a "sign" or "symbol" of God, not God Himself. It was this physical sight, this ocular experience, of the sign of God, i.e., of the angel, which caused the fear. After all, what is spiritual or intellectual, or what the "heart perceived" could not have been a matter for fear. Thirdly, both Bell and Watt say that the Prophet, after having

1. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

mistakenly claimed to have had a "vision" of God, subsequently modified his position not only in *sûrat al-Najm* but also elsewhere holding that human sight could not reach God. If it had been so, he could not have later on given an impression to any one that he had seen God. Now, the passages from Al-Zuhri, whether regarded as a narration of 'Â'ishah or of others, are obviously later than this supposed modification of his position by the Prophet. Hence neither 'Â'ishah (r.a.) nor any other subsequent reporter could have got the impression that the "vision" was in any way that of God. To interpret the passages as giving that impression would thus be simply anachronistic.

To proceed with the other statements of Watt. In connection with this question of fear caused supposedly by the appearance or presence of the Divine Watt states that according to the testimony of the Old Testament the fear of the near approach of the Divine has deep roots in the Semitic consciousness. The passages C & J which mention this fear, he observes,"seem to be mainly" explanations of the expression *al-muzzammil* in 73:1 and they suggest "that the later exegetes were merely inferring the presence of fear from the Qur'ân, and had no information about it apart from the Qur'ân."[1] Watt further says that the "awkward transition from *zammilûnî* to *muddaththir*" shows that the exegetes inferred the connection of *al-muzzammil,* which was not originally so, with the story of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) call. If therefore, argues Watt, "it seemed natural to these later exegetes to take *muzzammil* in this way, this fear of the onset of the Divine must have been widespread" and the Prophet "may well have shared in it."[2]

Now, Watt says that the later exegetes merely inferred "the presence of fear from the Qur'ân, and had no information about it apart from the Qur'ân". There is, however, no indication whatsoever in the Qur'ân about the fear. All that the *sûrahs al-Muzzammil* and *al-Muddaththir* indicate is that the Prophet is addressed by these titles and asked either to get up and pray at night or to rise up and warn, etc. Even *sûrat al-Najm*, which speaks of the "vision", does not contain any indication of the Prophet's having been at any time struck with fear. How could the later exegetes then have inferred "the presence of fear from the Qur'ân" if they "had no information about it apart from the Qur'ân"? The fact is that Watt here implicitly slips into Bell's view that the traditions are fabrications of a later age to explain the Qur'ânic statements. At the same time Watt founds his remarks on the fact of fear,

1. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
2. *Ibid.*

information about which is supplied only by the traditions and not at all by the Qur'ân. Watt's argument is, however, fallacions and round-about. It was the later exegetes who had no information about the fear, who inferred it from the Qur'ân and also inferred the connection of the expression *muzzammil* with the story of the Prophet's "call", and since they made this inference, the "fear at the onset of the Divine" must have been "widespread"; and as it was widespread, "Muḥammad may well have shared in it." Clearly Watt here first makes an unwarranted and incorrect assumption and then argues backward on the basis of that assumption to prove the existence of widespread fear at the "onset" or "near-approach" of the Divine in which the Prophet might have shared. In thus arguing Watt in effect turns the table on his preceptor Bell. For the latter would have us believe that Muḥammad (ﷺ) in his "ignorance" initially "claimed" that he had a vision of God; but Watt now tells us that the notion of the onset or near-approach of the Divine and the attendant fear was "widespread" and the Prophet only shared in it!

We are not, however, concerned here with the Old Testament information on the matter. We should only point out that in the second and third centuries of Islam, when the exegetes are alleged to have invented the traditions to provide explanations for the Qur'ânic statements, the so-called Old Testament notion and fear about the onset of the Divine could hardly have been in circulation, not to speak of being widespread, in the Islamic land. And for the reasons mentioned above, those exegetes could not have conceived the idea of a "vision" of God, particularly as both Bell and Watt themselves take care to note that the "Islamic orthodoxy" about it had already been crystallized by then. Nor can one conceivably read back a supposedly widespread third-century notion into a period prior even to the onset of that era.

As regards the second theme, namely, "despair" leading to "thoughts of suicide" Watt finds also its parallel "among the Old Testament prophets and from the lives of the Christian saints". To substantiate this parallellism he quotes what A. Poulain reproduces of St. Teresa of Avila's feelings as to "whether the locutions" she received "came from the devil or from the imagination" etc.[1] Watt then observes that the thought of suicide could hardly have been attributed to Muḥammad (ﷺ) "unless he said something which gave a basis" for it and that such "a period of despair would fit in with the accounts of the *fatrah*".[2]

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ibid.*

The analogy drawn here by Watt is completely inappropriate. For the statement of St. Teresa of Avila, which he quotes from A. Poulain's work, speaks only of her having hovered between faith and doubt as to whether the locutions were from God, from the devil or from imagination and of her at last being convinced that they were from God, "which she would have died to defend". The "despair" which could be dimly discerned here relates to the doubt about the real origin of the "locutions". Muḥammad's (ﷺ) despair, on the other hand, was not at all due to any doubts about the origin of what he had received, but solely because the coming of that thing had temporarily stopped. His case is thus completely different from that of St. Teresa of Avila. The analogy drawn by Watt with the Old Testament prophets and Christian saints seems to be purposeful; for, as we shall presently see, he ultimately suggests that the Islamic *waḥy* is comparable to the "inspiration" of the Christian prophets and saints — they received the "inspiration" (i.e. ideas) from God and then wrote down in their own words what they had understood through the "inspiration". Needless to point out, the concept of Qur'ânic *waḥy* is totally different. Incidentally, the quotation given here by Watt from A. Poulain's work appears to be another step towards using that writer's matrix to cast Islamic *waḥy* into it, as Watt finally does.

As regards the remark that Muḥammad (ﷺ) must have said something which provided a basis for the attribution of the thought of suicide to him, it has already been pointed out[1] that this statement of Al-Zuhrî is a conjecture on his part. Even Watt recognizes that Al-Zuhrî's statement in connection with the *fatrah* is his "conjecture".[2] The *fatrah* and the Prophet's despair on account of that are of course facts. His having mentioned this despair and his frequenting the hills in expectation of again meeting the angel appear to have provided the basis for this conjecture. Whatever might be the duration of the *fatrah* and the intensity of the Prophet's despair of account of that, they both emphatically illustrate the fact that *waḥy* was not something emanating from his own consciousness. It was none of his imaginative / intellectual locution. Had it been so, there would have been no *fatrah* and no resultant despair.

VIII. "ENCOURAGEMENT FROM KHADÎJAH AND WARAQAH"

Watt begins his discussion under this last sub-heading of his by stressing that there is "no reason for rejecting the account of how Khadîjah reassured

1. *Supra*, pp. 373-375, 384-385.
2. Watt, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

Muḥammad". It shows, continues Watt, that "Muḥammad was lacking in self-confidence at this stage". He further says, contradicting in effect Bell's view on the subject, that "there is no strong reason for doubting the authenticity "of the pharse about the *nâmûs*. Its use, "instead of the Qur'ânic Tawrah", argues Watt, is an argument for its genuineness. Watt then says that the reassurance from Waraqah was important. It encouraged Muḥammad (ﷺ) to "put the highest construction on his experiences". As such it was "of great importance in his interior development". It also shows that initially he "was of a hesitant nature". The rest of the story, observes Watt, "seems to be an attempt to explain why Waraqah, though he approved Muḥammad, did not become a Muslim".[1]

It has already been pointed out[2] that the use of the expression *nâmûs* is rather a conclusive evidence in favour of the genuineness of the account. Watt does not explain why the subsequent narrators or reporters should have been interested in defending Waraqah and in explaining why he did not become a Muslim. If they had really added to or modified the account, they would more naturally have done so in respect of those aspects of the account that, as Watt states, show their Prophet to be "lacking in self-confidence" and "of a hesitant nature". The fact is that neither the one nor the other part of the account is a later addition "from inference or imagination". The account as a whole illustrates the fact that, whatever might have been the motive behind the Prophet's solitary stay at Ḥirâ', and whatever might have been the nature of *taḥannuth*, the coming of *waḥy* was unexpected and surprising to him and that he did neither plan nor make any preparations for giving himself out as a Prophet to his people.

Like Bell, Watt thinks that the word *nâmûs* is derived from the Greek *nomos* and means "the law or revealed scriptures". Waraqah's remarks, says Watt, would thus have been made after Muḥammad (ﷺ) "had started to receive revelations" and they meant that what had come to him "was to be identified or at least classed with the Jewish and Christian scriptures" and that he "should be founder or legislator of a community".[3]

Waraqah's remarks were of course made after the Prophet had received the first revelation, not "revelations". Had he already received a number of

1. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
2. *Supra*, pp. 425-426.
3. Watt, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

revelations he would have been familiarized with the affair, the initial surprise or uncertainty would have been over and there would have been no reason for his going to Waraqah for consultation. On the other hand, if Waraqah had meant to say what Watt thinks he had meant, then there were deeper reasons for his doing so. It is just not conceivable that an intelligent, knowledgeable and experienced individual like Waraqah, after only listening to an unusual story from a junior acquaintance and relative of his, would jump to the conclusion that a law or scripture comparable to those of the Jews and Christians had started coming to him. Waraqah must have been sure of two things before he made the reported remarks. He must have got an impression from a study of the old scriptures that they contained indications of the coming of another Messenger and of other revelations upon him. Waraqah must also have been convinced, from a knowledge of the character and antecedent of Muḥammad (ﷺ) that he possessed the quality of being such a Messenger. Hence, when he disclosed his unusual experience to Waraqah, he immediately came to the conclusion that what he had learnt from the old scriptures about the coming of a Prophet and another revelation had come to pass and that Muḥammad (ﷺ) the faithful, the trustworthy and the truthful was the recepient of that divine commission and revelation.

Whatever the origin and meaning of the expression *nâmûs*, it, as used by Waraqah, had no doubt reference to what had come to Muḥammad (ﷺ). And that reference was not simply to the "words" he had received, but also to the unusual circumstance in which they were received. This unusual circumstance was the appearance of the entity who had delivered the words. It was this "appearance" which caused Muḥammad's (ﷺ) surprise and bewilderment and which brought him and his wife to the wise man of the community in search of an explanation. Had Muḥammad (ﷺ) simply "heard" the words, or had it been an "interior locution", imaginative or intellectual, there would hardly have been any reason for surprise and fear. The "appearance" or "vision" is thus the central feature of the beginning of "the call". *Nâmûs* had reference to this feature as well as to the words that were received.

Waraqah's use of the expression *nâmûs* is significant in another respect. It is clear from all the accounts that the very first persons to whom Muḥammad (ﷺ) disclosed his unusual experience were Khadîjah and Waraqah. Had he "claimed" or "interpreted" or supposed his "vision" to be one of God, Waraqah, with his knowledge of the Jewish and Christian scriptures, would have

straightway dismissed it as imagination and mistake and would not have left it for Muḥammad (ﷺ) or for any twentieth century scholar to subsequently find out the mistake. Nor is *nâmûs*, whatever its origin and meaning, applicable to a "vision of God".

After having stressed the importance of Waraqah's reassurance Watt says that the concluding words of the "first" revelation, "Who taught by the pen, Taught man what he did not know", refer "almost certainly" to "previous revelations". By "previous revelations" Watt means the Old and the New Testament and argues that there is no point in telling the Prophet that God "taught the use of pen" if he could neither read nor write. And since he was in close contact with Waraqah who "is outstanding for his study of the Christian scriptures", Muḥammad (ﷺ) had learnt from him "much of a general character". When therefore he repeated the passage it must "have reminded him of what he owed to Waraqah". "Later Islamic conceptions", concludes Watt, "may have been largely moulded by Waraqah's ideas, e.g. of the relation of Muḥammad's revelation to previous revelations".[1]

It needs hardly any mentioning that there is rarely any orientalist who, whenever there is an occasion to refer to the well-known story of the Prophet's consultation with Waraqah, fails to make use of it for pressing the view that the former learnt much from the latter for producing the Qur'ân and Islam. That general theme of borrowing from the previous religious systems, particularly from Judaism and Christianity, has been dealt with previously.[2] Here we may only make some observations on Watt's above mentioned remarks. The statement "Who taught by the pen" or "Who taught the use of pen" (there is very little difference in the sense in the two forms of translation) is not meant simply to emphasize that particular skill. The passage as a whole emphasizes, as mentioned before, man's origin and creation on the one hand, and the most important element in his mental and intellectual development, namely, his knowledge and intelligence. Nothing could be a better start for the revelation than to remind man that he owed his origin and creation, as well as the quality which distinguished him from the rest of the creation, his knowledge and intelligence, to God alone. In this sense the mention of pen here is figurative. On the other hand it also signifies that what was being revealed to the Prophet was the beginning of a 'scripture'

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.
2. *Supra*, chapter XI.

which was to be preserved and transmitted by means of reading and recitation as well as by means of the pen, it mattered not whether the Prophet himself possessed the skill of writing or not. Watt's main argument here, however, leads us nowhere. If the *iqra'* passage, as Watt suggests, only reminded Muḥammad (ﷺ) when he repeated it "of what he owed to Waraqah", then there would have been no reason for his going to Waraqah for an explanation of the whole matter. On the other hand, if Waraqah had taught so many things, he would not have made the remaks he did; he would simply have said that this was what he had so long been teaching Muḥammad (ﷺ) and that he had after all realized the truth. While suggesting that the Prophet had learnt a good deal from Waraqah, Watt and the other orientalists do not ask themselves this simple question: Why should Waraqah have been privy to Muḥammad's (ﷺ) plans for producing a new scripture and a new religion? They seem to have avoided also the question whether it would not have been far more sensible on the Prophet's part to learn reading and thus himself acquire a knowledge of the old scriptures and make his own plans and preparations, than to let others know his secrets. Again, if "later Islamic conceptions", such as "the relation of Muḥammad's revelation to previous revelations" were moulded by Waraqah's ideas, such ideas the latter must have obtained from his study of the previous scriptures. The Islamic conception would thus be only in line with the teachings of the Old and the New Testament, and in that case the orientalists should find no difficulty in acknowledging the truth and reasonableness of the particular concept, namely, the fundamental unity and relationship of all the revealed scriptures. If "by later Islamic conceptions" is meant that the conception of "the relation of Muḥammad's revelation to previous revelations" was developed after the time of the Prophet, then the statement would be totally wrong; for that relationship is very much emphasized in the Qur'ân itself, and that also in such an early passage as 87:18-19 which clearly states: "Verily this is in the early scriptures, the scriptures of Ibrâhîm and Mûsâ". If, on the other hand, by "later" is meant that the Prophet subsequently related his "revelation to previous revelations", then the point is very much admitted by himself, and there is no need to take all the troubles to prove it. In fact the need is far more to look into the question of what he claimed to be different or new in the revelation he received or claimed that what he received was also contained in the past revelations but had been lost on account of human fault or error.

CHAPTER XX

WAḤY AND THE ORIENTALISTS: IV. THE THEORY OF INTELLECTUAL LOCUTION

In the final section of his treatment of the subject under caption: *The form of Muḥammad's Prophetic consciousness*, Watt summarizes his as well as his predecessors' views. As a preliminary to his doing this he points out the West's awareness, since the time of Carlyle, of the Prophet's sincerity and, like Bell, stresses the need to "hold firmly to the belief of his sincerity until the opposite is conclusively proved". He then expresses his intention to remain neutral with regard to the different views about the Qur'ân held by the orthodox Muslim, the Western secularist and the modern Christian, saying that he would, out of courtesy, use the expression "the Qur'ân says" and not "Muḥammad says", but if he speaks "of a passage being revealed to Muḥammad" this should not be taken as an acceptance of the Muslim point of view and the reader should "supply 'as the Muslims say' or some such phrase'".[1]

I. WATT'S MATRIX: A. POULAIN'S THEORY

After these preliminaries Watt introduces A. Poulain's definitions of "locution" and "vision" as given in his book, *Graces of Interior Prayer*.[2] According to that writer, says Watt, "locution" and "vision" may each be either "exterior" or "interior". "Exterior locutions" are "words heard by the ear, though not produced naturally". Similarly "exterior visions" are "visions of material objects, or what seem to be such, perceived by the bodily eyes". "Interior locution" and "interior vision" may each be either "imaginative" or "intellectual". "Imaginative locutions" are received directly by the imaginative sense, without the assistance of the ear. An "intellectual louction", on the other hand, is "a simple communication of thought without words, and consequently without any definite language".[3] With this "equipment" Watt turns "to the Qur'ân and the traditional accounts".

Before seeing how Watt uses this equipment it would be worthwhile to indicate the inherent inconsistency in his approach. He professes to remain

1. Watt, *M. at M.*, 52-53.
2. London,1928.
3. Watt, *op. cit.*, p. 54, citing A. Poulain, *op. cit.*, pp. 299 ff.

neutral with regard to the theological questions and to refrain from expressing any theological opinion. But having said so he immediately turns to what is avowedly a book on "mystical theology" dealing essentially with "interior" prayer and the experiences of Christian saints and mystics, in order to explain Qur'ânic *waḥy* or what he calls "the form of Muḥammad's prophetic consciousness". Secondly, he declares that he would not deny "any fundamental Islamic belief". In practice, however, he immediately proceeds to do just the opposite thing, that is to show that the Qur'ânic *waḥy* fits in with A. Poulain's definition of "intellectual locution", that is, it is a "simple communication of thought without words" etc. This is nothing but a denial of, if not an affront to, the most fundamental Islamic belief that the Qur'ânic *waḥy* is *not* a "simple communication of thought without words" and that it was *not* a form of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) consciousness, normal or supra-normal. The fact is that Watt has introduced A. Poulain's equipment only to prove the usual Christian missionary and orientalist point of view, more particularly the view of Bell, but only in an intellectual garb. It is understandable that being a sincere Christian Watt cannot conscientiously subscribe to the Muslim point of view. But being no doubt aware of what he actually wanted to do it would have been better for him if he had not committed himself to neutrality and undertaken not to deny any fundamental Islamic belief.

II. WATT'S APPLICATION OF THE THEORY CONSIDERED

Having introduced Poulain's definition Watt refers briefly to the "manners" (*kayfiyât*) of revelation as mentioned in Al-Suyûṭi's *Itqân* and other sources and says that the main types are described, however, in the Qur'ânic passage 42:50-52. He translates this passage as follows: "It belongeth not to any human being that God should speak to him except by suggestion (*waḥyan*) or from behind a veil, Or by sending a messenger to suggest (*fa-yûḥiya*) by His permission what He pleaseth... Thus We have suggested to thee a spirit belonging to Our affair (*awḥaynâ*)".[1]

"The first manner therefore", continues Watt, "is where God speaks by *waḥy*". He then states three things. He refers to Bell who, it is said, after studying the various uses of the term *waḥy* in the Qur'ân has shown that at least in its early portions the word means not verbal communication of a text, but "suggestion", "prompting" or "inspiration" coming into a person's mind[2]. Second, Watt says that for "most of the Meccan period" *waḥy* was "the work

1. Watt, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

of the Spirit". He cites in support of this statement 26:192-194 which he translates as: "Verily it is the revelation (*tanzîl*) of the Lord of the Worlds, With which hath come down (*nazala bi-hi*) the Faithful Spirit Upon thy heart, that thou mayest be of those who warn". Watt adds here that the mention of angels bearing a message "is apparently later". Thirdly, he says that so far as he has noticed there is no mention "during the Meccan period" of "the Prophet 'hearing' What is brought down to him". On these grounds Watt says that "the Spirit" introduced "the message into Muḥammad's heart or mind by some method other than speaking to him" and that this would then be "an interior locution, and probably an intellectual one".[1]

Now, the passage 42:51-52 does indeed describe the main manners in which God communicates His words to man. Watt's translation of this passage is, however, both inaccurate and misleading. The rendering of *waḥy* and *awḥâ* as "suggestion" and "suggested" is, as we have shown earlier,[2] wrong. Watt does well here to refer to Bell and his conclusion about the meaning of the term *waḥy*. We have previously discussed his article in detail and have shown that his suggestion of "suggestion" etc. being the meaning of the term is very much wrong and inapplicable in the case of Qur'ânic *waḥy*. That the expression "suggestion" cannot be appropriate in every place where the term *waḥy* or its derivatives occur would be evident even from the passage which Watt has translated here. Thus, even if for argument's sake we employ "suggestion" for *waḥyan* in the first clause of the passage, the same expression cannot be accurate in translating *fa yûḥiya* in the second clause (i.e., "by sending a messenger to suggest [?] by His permission...)". In this latter case what the messenger does, because he is only a messenger and not a delegate or deputy, is really not that he "suggests", but only conveys or delivers what is God's *waḥy*. Thus *yûḥiya* in this instance means "conveys" or "delivers" and not "suggests", as Watt translates it. He is also confusing in translating *'âyah* 52 as "Thus We have suggested to thee a spirit belonging to Our affair". How a "spirit belonging to Our affair" could be "suggested" is not easily understandable. Nor would the meaning of the expression be clear. The meaning of the expression *min 'amrinâ* here is "by Our command". But even if we accept Watt's translation of this expression, *rûḥ* here is admittedly the object of the verb *'awḥaynâ*, that is *rûḥ* is something which has been

1. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
2. *Supra*, pp. 430-432.

waḥy-ied. In other words *rûḥ* here means *waḥy* as object, not as verb. The nature of the object is clarified in the concluding part of the *'âyah* which runs: "You did not know what the Book is, nor the faith, but We have made it a light wherewith We guide whomsoever of Our servants We will..."[1] This explanatory clause shows clearly that the *rûḥ* mentioned previously is the Book, i.e., the text of the Book (Qur'ân), which was *wahy*-ied to the Prophet.

As regards Watt's second argument that for most of the Makkan period *waḥy* was the "work of the Spirit" and that angels are mentioned as messengers "apparently" later, he is mistaken in two ways. His citing of the passage 26:192-194 in this connection shows that he has misunderstood the sense of the passage as a whole and also the meaning of "the faithful spirit" (*al-rûḥ al-'amîn*). Watt is speaking here about the first manner, i.e., "where God speaks by *waḥy*", and not about the other manners, namely, speaking from "behind the veil" or by "sending a messenger". The passage in question, however, relates to this last mentioned manner, and not at all to the first manner. It appears that Watt has taken "the faithful spirit" here in the sense of God. Hence he has cited the passage as illustrative of the first manner of *waḥy* and has also capitalized the first letters of the words "faithful" and "spirit". In doing so he appears to have imported a theological concept peculiar to Christianity into the explanation of a Qur'ânic expression. He disregards or fails to understand the implication of the first *'âyah* of the passage under reference. It speaks of the Qur'ân as a *tanzîl*, i.e., something "sent-down", and the sender is the "Lord of the Worlds". The next *'âyah* mentions the agency which brought it down — "with which hath come down (*nazala bihi*) the faithful spirit". The faithful spirit is thus the messenger who brought it down. Incidentally, it may be observed that Watt has translated the word *tanzîl*, which clearly stands here for the Qur'ânic *waḥy*, as "revelation", apparently because he cannot by any stretch of the imagination apply the word "suggestion" here. Even his proviso that the reader should supply "as the Muslims say" or any such phrase is inapplicable in the present instance.

As regards the expression "the faithful spirit" it has already been shown[2] that it is the same as *rasûl karîm* mentioned in 69:40 and 81:19. In the latter place (81:21) he is described also as *'amîn*, and that he is very much an

1. The Arabic text runs as follows:

﴿ ... ما كنت تدرِى ما الكتـٰب ولا الإيمـٰن ولـٰكن جعلنـٰه نورًا نهدِى بهِ من نَّشآء من عبادنا ... ﴾ (٤٢:٥٢)

2. *Supra*, pp. 419-422, 454-457.

angel. This also negatives Watt's claim that "angels" are spoken of as messengers only "later". It should further be noted that nowhere in the Qur'ân is *al-'amîn* mentioned as an attribute or name of God; nor is the adjective, 'the faithful', ever applied to the "spirit" which the Christians consider as an aspect of the "Trinity". The term *rûḥ* has been used in the Qur'ân in various senses, namely, spirit of life, angel and, as just seen in 42:50-52, in the sense of *waḥy* as object.

Watt's third argument is that there is no mention in the Makkan period "of the Prophet 'hearing' what is brought down to him". Of course neither in the Makkan nor in the Madinan passages of the Qur'ân is there any mention that the Prophet "heard" a revelation. This is so because the Qur'ân is not the Prophet's composition. But if one looks with a little care one would not miss that the author of the Qur'ân, God, instructs the Prophet at the very initial stage how to receive revelations and repeatedly asks him to listen carefully to what is recited to him before hastening to recite and repeat it. "Do not move your tongue in order to hasten with it. It is upon Us (to see) its re-collection and recitation. So when We have it recited, then repeat its recitation/reading". (75:16-18).[1] The same instruction is repeated in 20:114, "And be not in haste with the Qur'ân before its communication to you is completed".[2] Of similar import, again, is 87:6, "We shall enable you to recite / read it; so you shall not forget it".[3] These are all early Makkan passages and they contain unmistakable exhortations to the Prophet to first listen to the recitation of the Qur'ân and then recite it. Indeed the Qur'ân, as both Bell and Watt recognize, means reading/recitation. Needless to point out that nothing is suitable for reading or recitation, even if "from memory", but a specific text. And God unequivocally says in the Qur'ân that He has sent it down as a "recitation, in Arabic", "Verily We have sent it down as a recitation/reading, in Arabic..."[4]

Watt seems to use the expression *'alâ qalbika* (upon thy heart) in the passage 26:192-193 to mean that *waḥy* was some "suggestion" or idea. The expression in question does in no way imply that sense; for it is immediately added that what is delivered is in "clear Arabic tongue" (26:194 بلسان عربىٍّ مُبين),

1. The Arabic text runs as follows:
﴿لا تحرك به لسانك لتعجل به * إن علينا جمعه وقرءانه * فإذا قرأنـٰه فاتَّبع قرءانه﴾
2. The Arabic text runs as follows: ﴿... ولا تعجل بالقرءان من قبل أن يُقضىٰ إليك وحيُه ...﴾
3. The Arabic text is: ﴿سنقرئك فلا تنسىٰ﴾
4. 12:2. ﴿إنآ أنزلنـٰه قرءٰنًا عربيا...﴾. See also 12:113; 39:28; 41:3; 42:7 and 43:3.

thus removing any ground for doubting the nature of what is delivered. In fact the expression *'alâ qalbika* is intended to emphasize that the text thus delivered was transfixed in the Prophet's heart, i.e., mind and brain, by God's will so that he would not forget it. It has the same sense as is expressed in 75:17 ("It is upon Us its recollection and recitation" and in 87:6 ("We shall enable you to read it, so you shall not forget it"). In fact, "to get by heart" is a familiar English phrase for committing to memory. All our knowledge of mother or foreign tongue, not to speak of any specific text or group of words, is in the ultimate analysis such getting by heart of each and every word of the vocabulary of the respective language or languages, as makes us not feel, when we see or use them, that we are merely reproducing them from our memory (i.e., heart). The expression *'alâ qalbika* in the passage under reference has this sense of transfixing in the Prophet's 'heart', and not the sense of "suggestion" or ideas communicated to him.

In connection with this discussion about the first manner of *waḥy* Watt cites the *ḥadîth* of Al-Ḥârith ibn Hîshâm[1] in which the Prophet is reported as saying that sometimes *waḥy* used to come to him like the reverberation of a bell (صلصلة الجرس). Watt says that this is "quite compatible" with the first manner and that it was "doubtless an imaginative experience", an "intellectual locution". He states: "The hearing of the bell is doubtless an imaginative experience, but there is no mention of hearing anyone speaking or of hearing words spoken, not even imaginatively. On the contrary, at the end of the experience he [the Prophet] appears simply to find the words of the revelation in his heart. It is fairly clear that,... this is a description of an intellectual locution".[2]

It should at once be pointed out that Watt is not quite correct in thus relating this manner of *waḥy* to what he calls the first manner, i.e., *waḥy* coming without the instrumentality of the angel; for in another version of the same report in *Bukhârî* it is specifically mentioned that this was also a manner in which *waḥy* was delivered by the angel.[3] Watt also misstates the case when he says: "The hearing of the bell is doubtless an imaginative experience..." It was no hearing of the bell; it was *waḥy* which the Prophet heard like the sounding of the bell. The expression *mithla* (مثل) used along with *ṣalṣalah*

1. *Bukhârî*, no. 2.
2. Watt, *op. cit*, 55-56.
3. *Bukhârî*, no. 3215.

makes this quite clear. Nor was it an "imaginative experience", as Watt terms it. For the Prophet unequivocally mentions that it was "the hardest on me", thereby saying that it was very much a physical experience on his part. The same thing is emphasized by 'A'ishah (r.a.) when she says that she saw him, at the coming down of *waḥy* upon him, "on an extremely cold day, with his forehead running down with perspiration". It is strange that Watt, after having quoted this report verbatim (the words in quotation are his) suggests that it was "an imaginative experience"!

A second grave mistake on Watt's part lies in his statement: "... there is no mention of hearing anyone speaking or of hearing words spoken, not even imaginatively". Now, the material clause here in the report is: *wa qad wa'aytu 'anhu mâ qâla* which means "and I committed to memory / got by heart from him *what he said*". The fact of something having been said to him is thus clearly stated in the report. Watt ignores this significant statement in the report and asserts that "there is no mention" of "anyone speaking" on the occasion. He seems to think that the verb *wa'aytu* does not bear any sense of hearing and that it means to understand something within one's own self. This is quite wrong. The primary meaning of the verb *wa'â / ya'î* (وعى / يعي) is to hold, to contain, to retain in memory, to remember, to listen carefully and remember, etc.[1] More particularly, when it is used along with the expression *mâ qâla* (ما قال) it invariably means listening carefully and getting by heart what is said. Watt himself translates the clause as: "... and I have understood from it what He (or "he") said". Even in English, when it is said, "I have understood what he said", it does not exclude hearing of that which is said. In the above noted translation of his, however, Watt commits another mistake. He translates the word *'anhu* in the text as "from it". He obviously means by "it" what he conceives to be the sound of the bell; but this is not the case. The pronoun *hu* here refers to the angel, not to *ṣalṣalat al-jaras*: for in that case it would have been framed in the feminine form *hâ*, *ṣalṣalah* being feminine in form.

In fact the verb *wa'a/ya'î* in its various forms is the appropriate term used in *ḥadîth* literature to mean listening carefully and getting by heart what is said or stated by another person. The following are three typical instances illustrating this special meaning of the verb.

1. See *Lisân al-'Arab*, under *wa'y*, or any standard Arabic English dictionary, for instance, Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* (ed. J. Milton Cowan), under *wa'y*.

(a) The f^mous *ḥadîth* of 'Abû Hurayrah in which he said:

(... ما كان أحد أعلم بحديث رسول الله ﷺ مني من عبد الله بن عمْرٍو فإنه كان يكتب بيده ويعي بقلبه وكنت أعيه بقلبي ولا أكتب بيدي ...)

"... None knows more of the *ḥadîth* of the Messenger of Allah, may peace and blessings of Allah be on him, than me except 'Abd Allah ibn 'Amr; for he used to write (it) down with his hand and also to get it by heart, while I used to get it by heart and did not write it with my hand..."[1]

(b) The *ḥadîth* of Khâlid al-'Udwânî:

(قال فسمعته يقرأ ﴿ والسماء والطارق ﴾ حتى ختمها قال فوعيتها في الجاهلية وأنا مشرك ثم قرأتها في الإسلام ...)

"...He said: Thus I heard him read *Wa al-Samâ' wa al-Ṭariq* (*sûrah* 86) till he finished it. He said: So I committed it to memory (*wa'aytuhâ*) in the state of *jâhiliyyah* while I had been a polytheist, then I recited it in Islam (i.e. after his embracing of Islam)."[2]

(c) The *ḥadilth* of 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ûd:

(.. وقد وعيت عن كل واحد منهم الحديث الذى حدثنى ...)

"...And I had committed to memory from everyone of them the *ḥadîth* which he narrated to me..."[3]

There are many other reports wherein the verb is used specifically to mean listening carefully and retaining in memory what is said.[4] The same sense for the verb is clearly borne out by the Qur'ânic passage 69:12:

﴿ لنجعلها لكم تذكرة وتعيها أذن وَاعيـة ﴾ (٦٩ : ١٢)

"That We might make it a reminder for you and that the retaining ears might retain it (in remembrance)."

Thus Watt is wrong in understanding the meaning of the verb *wa'aytu* occurring in the report and in supposing that there is no mention in it of anything being said or heard and, further, that the Prophet at the end of the experience "simply found the words of the revelation in his heart." A no less fundamental defect in Watt's treatment of the report is that while it speaks of a single manner of the coming of *waḥy*, he bifurcates the process into two different types of experiences — the one, the so-called "imaginative expe-

1. *Musnad*, II, 403.
2. *Musnad*, IV, 335.
3. *Ibid.*, VI, 194.
4. See for instance, *Bukhârî*, no. 2047; *Tirmidhî*, no. 2658; *Dârimî*, Intro. p. 24; *Musnad*, II, 161, 475; IV, 254, 366.

rience", and the other, the so-called "intellectual locution". The text of the report in no way warrants such bifurcation of the single process. The manner of the coming of *waḥy* spoken of here was neither an imaginative experience nor an intellectual locution. It was very much a physical experience on the Prophet's part and a vocal communication of a text which he heard and retained in memory.

Speaking about the second manner where Allah's speaks "from behind a veil" Watt says that this had reference primarily to some early experiences of the Prophet, "such as that in passage B of the material from az-Zuhrî", where "the Truth came to him and said, O Muḥammad, thou art the Messenger of God."[1] Watt further says that since the words "from behind the veil" suggest that there is no vision of the speaker, it implies that in such a case only the "words are heard, and that therefore this is an imaginative locution (or even an exterior locution)."[2]

In the above mentioned sentences Watt in effect admits his inconsistency (though he does not seem to realize it). He has so long been utilizing his passage B, particularly the expression "the Truth came to him and said...", as evidence of a vision of God, or at least an ocular vision of a symbol of God (or probably, as he assumes, a mental or imaginative vision of God). But now he cites the passage to illustrate the manner of Allah's speaking "from behind a veil" i.e., without being seen, and hence it was the case of only hearing the words without a vision —"an imaginative" or "exterior locution". It is indeed difficult to keep pace with Watt's inconsistencies! The only relieving feature is that he quicly adds that this manner "was presumably not common" and conceivably "intended for a description of Moses"[3]

Speaking about the third manner where God sends a messenger to deliver *waḥy* Watt says that Muslim scholars think that the messenger was Jibrîl and it was he who brought *waḥy* from the beginning; but Western scholars note that he is not mentioned *by name* in the Qur'ân until the Medinan period, that "there is much" both in the Qur'ân and tradition "that is contrary to the common Muslim view", and that the Muslim view "reads back later conceptions into the earlier period."[4] Watt further says that during the Madinan period

1. Watt, *op. cit.*, p. 56.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, p. 56.

revelations by means of Jibrîl might have been common; but even in "such cases the revelation was presumably an imaginative locution", for the mention of Jibrîl coming in the "form of a man" suggests "an imaginative vision."[1]

Here Watt reiterates the same old plea that Jibrîl is not mentioned *by name* in the Qur'ân until the Madinan period and states on that basis that the Muslim view reads back later conceptions into the earlier period. This specific remark is an exact echo of what Bell says in this connection.[2] This remark and the statement that the Muslim view is contrary to much of what is contained in the Qur'ân and tradition are obviously based on the above mentioned plea and also on the other assumptions, namely, (a) that Al-Zuhrî's report speaks of "the truth" and not of Jibrîl bringing the revelation; (b) that the passage of *sûrat al-Najm* speaks of a vision of God and (c) that the term *waḥy* as used in the Qur'ân does not mean verbal communication of a text. All these assumptions have already been examined and shown to be wrong and untenable.[3] Hence the above mentioned remarks are also untenable.

Watt admits that revelations by means of Jibrîl might have been common throughout the Madinan period. *Why* then the same angel could not have been the conveyer of *waḥy* in the earlier period is not explained by Watt. His predecessor Bell of course suggests, as seen earlier,[4] that Jibrîl was introduced at Madina because it was only then that the Prophet came to know about him. The unreasonableness of this explanation has been pointed out earlier. That Watt does not advance any explanation in this connection probably indicates that he is aware of the weakness of Bell's explanation.

While recognizing that during the Madinan period revelations by means of Jibrîl could be common Watt says that in such cases these were "presumably imaginative" locutions because the traditions mention Jibrîl appearing in "the form of a man" which suggests that his appearance was "an imaginative vision". It may only be pointed out here that the coming of Jibrîl to the Prophet was not always an affair strictly private to him. Sometimes, as in the famous *ḥadîth* relating to *îmân* and *iḥsân*, the appearance of Jibrîl in the

1. *Ibid.*, p.57.
2. See *M.W.*, 1934, p.149.
3. *Supra*, pp. 609-627, 650-662.
4. *Supra*, pp. 442-444.

form of a man was very much a physical affair noticed by the Prophet's companions. Therefore the matter cannot be disposed of simply by saying that the angel's appearance was "presumably an imaginative vision" peculiar to the Prophet alone.

It would have been observed that whatever the manner of *waḥy* might be, Watt has attempted to show it to be either an imaginative or an intellectual locution. Thus the first manner of *waḥy*, according to Watt, was an "interior", "probably an intellectual" locution; the second manner, "an imaginative locution (or even an exterior locution)", and the third manner "presumably an imaginative" locution. The whole manoeuvre is directed towards showing that the Qur'ânic *waḥy* was a matter of the Prophet's mind, "intellect" and "consciousness", not verbal communication of any text made physically by any agency. By such manoeuvres Watt seems to aim also at bringing Islamic revelation in line with the Christian concept of "inspiration". Hence he asks his readers not to confuse "visions" and "locutions" with hallucination, to take seriously the "science" and "discipline" of "mystical theology" as developed by writers like A. Poulain and suggests that "it would undoubtedly be profitable to make a full comparison of the phenomenal aspects of Muḥammad's experiences with those of Christian saints and mystics."[1]

It should at once be pointed out that the analogy so far made by Watt between the "manners" of Qur'ânic *waḥy* and the mystical concepts of A. Poulain is neither convincing nor tenable. Nor are the manners of Qur'ânic revelation comparable with the experiences of the Christian saints and mystics who being "inspired" are said to have put down in their own words what they understood from the "inspiration".

Finally Watt refers to "the physical accompaniments of the reception of revelation" and to the instances of the Prophet's putting on a *dithâr* and says that the symptoms described could not be identical with epilepsy which allegation Watt rejects as "completely unsound based on mere ignorance and prejudice." Having done so, however, he harps on the allegation of the Prophet's having known something of the method of "inducing" revelations "by 'listening' or self-hyptonism or whatever we like to call it."[2] It is further alleged that the Prophet knew the "way of emending the Qur'ân;...of discovering the correct form of what had been revealed in incomplete or incor-

1. Watt, *op. cit.*, p. 57.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 57-58.

rect form."[1] Earlier, while speaking about what Watt calls the Prophet's attempt to "induce emending revelations", he observes that "it is part of orthodox Muslim theory that some revelations were abrogated by others."[2]

Now, it is to be noted that Watt here combines two different theories of his predecessors into one theme. He reiterates, on the one hand, Margoliouth's theory of inducing revelations by a sort of self-hypnotism etc., and, on the other, relates it with Bell's theory of "revision" of the Qur'ân by the Prophet. It may be recalled that while Margoliouth bases his theory of "inducing" on what is called "the physical accompaniments of the reception of revelation", Bell bases his theory on the language-style of the Qur'ân and the theory of abrogation. So far as the latter's views are concerned, they have been examined previously and found to be untenable.[3] It may once again be pointed out that the concept of "abrogation" relates not to the replacement of any *'âyah* of the Qur'ân by another *'âyah* or *'âyahs*, but to the amendement of certain *ḥukms* or instructions and rules of guidance. Watt combines the two themes by a subtle shift from the "physical accompaniments" to what is called "the technic" which the Prophet is alleged to have developed of "listening" and "discovering the missing verses", of "emending the Qur'ân", etc. The innuendo that apparently links the so-called "inducing" of revelations on the one hand and the "technic" of emending or revising the Qur'ân on the other is that in both cases it was a skill and technic acquired or artificially produced by the Prophet — a sort of "self-hypnotism or whatever we like to call it." It is difficult to see how this innuendo is any the better than the allegation of epilepsy which Watt so grandiloquently rejects. The main reason for his rejection of the theory of epilepsy appears to be not an intention to present the Prophet's image in a better form but a realiztion of the fact, as Watt points out, that "that disease leads to physical and mental degeneration, whereas Muḥammad was in the fullest possession of his faculties to the very end."[4]

In making the alternative and no less serious reflection on the Prophet's character and integrity Watt does not cite a single instance of when the Prophet "induced" the "physical accompaniments" or applied the "technic" in

1. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
3. *Supra*, Ch. I, sec. IV.
4. Watt, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

"emending the Qur'ân" or in "discovering the missing verses". Watt simply disposes of this basic requirement in substantiating the allegation by saying that "the details must remain conjectural, but it would seem certain that Muḥammad had some way of emending the Qur'ân..."[1] Thus does Watt present his conclusion avowedly on the basis of what is "conjectural" and what would "seem to be certain". Yet he starts the section by reminding others that in the matter of the Prophet's sincerity and integrity "conclusive proof is a much stricter requirement than a show of plausibility". Clearly Watt has sacrificed his professed objective at the altar not even of plausibility but of conjecture savouring of prejudice.

Watt somewhat mollifies his conclusion by adding that the fact that "Muḥammad sometimes induced his experiences of revelation" is not relevant "to the theologian's judgement of validity".[2] The statement is unnecessary because Watt professes not to pass any theological opinion. But whether the question is relevant or not for the theologian's judgement, it is very much relevant to the historian's quest for the truth. By merely reproducing his predecessors' views that the Prophet sometimes "induced", that is, artificially produced the revelation or emendation of the Qur'ân, by self-hypnotism or the like, the historian Watt has obviously slipped away from his stand as the historian and has simply failed to act up to the standard he had set for himself at the beginning.

It appears that Watt here labours under a difficulty. Having concentrated his attention almost exclusively on the objective of casting the "experiences of revelation" into Poulain's mould of "imaginative" and "intellectual" locutions he at last finds himself confronted with the facts of physical hardships and symptoms that undoubtedly sometimes accompanied the coming of *waḥy* to the Prophet. Watt finds it impossible to fit them in the theory of intellectual or imaginative locutions. Hence he simply dumps them into the dustbin of the Mrgoliouth-Bell theories of inducing of revelations and emendation of the Qur'ân. He seems to have persuaded himself that since the theory of disease (epilepsy) does not work, that of deliberate act, namely, artificially producing and inducing the symptoms and revelations would. If Watt had considered the facts really objectively he would not have missed the point that "the physical accompaniments of the reception of revelation"

1. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
2. *Ibid.*

strongly militate against the theory of intellectual or imaginative locution. After all, the Christian saints and mystics whom Poulain has chiefly in view do not appear to have had the physical accompaniments of revelation experienced by the Prophet. Hence his case is very much different from that of the saints and mystics. Whatever the nature of their "interior prayer" and "inspiration", their situation cannot simply be transferred to the Prophet.

The instances of the physical accompaniments of the reception of revelation mentioned in the sources are indeed very few. If, therefore, *waḥy* was for most of the time what is called intellectual or imaginative locutions as Watt says, it is not understandable why the Prophet should at all have had recourse to the method of "inducing", i.e. artificially producing the symptoms and revelations. The question of inducing the symptoms arises only if they are a constant feature or concomitant of the coming of *waḥy*. But that is not at all the case. Hence neither were the symptoms ever induced by the Prophet nor was the coming of *waḥy* without those symptoms merely intellectual or imaginative locutions.

The expression "imaginative locution" or "intellectual locution" is in fact a contradiction in terms. "Locution" means "style of speech", "way of using words", "phrase or idiom". Poulain says that while "imaginative locution" is received by the imaginative sense without the assistance of ear, "intellectual locution" is "a simple communication of thought without words, and consequently without any definite language". Now, thoughts and ideas, however abstract, could be conceived or communicated only by means of words and language, these being their only vehicle. Words are thus inseparable from thoughts and ideas. Any person, whatever his language, thinks and dreams in his own language, whether he expresses them vocally or not, or whether he uses the same set of words or the same language while expressing them. Any person who has no language can have no idea and no thought. Poulain's definition of "intellectual locution" as "simple communication of thought" without words and without language thus appears to be a high-sounding nonsense.

Whatever the sense Poulain and Watt assume for the expressions, the act of conceiving something, whether intellectually or imaginatively, presupposes the existence of its essence in the sub-conscious mind of the person concerned. He must have obtained its impression, idea or image somehow or other at some stage or other of his life. In the case of the Prophet, despite all

the theories of his having allegedly learnt a good deal from Waraqah ibn Nawfal and other people in the markets of Makka and elsewhere, it cannot be proved that he had previously obtained the ideas and information about all that is mentioned or dealt with in the Qur'ân. If, on the other hand, this pre-requisite of the existence of subconscious knowledge or idea is dispensed with, it becomes necessary to import the role of the "supernatural" in the matter. Watt of course once says that the Prophet might have received communications "supernaturally".[1] In applying the theory of intellectual and imaginative locutions to the case of Qur'ânic *waḥy*, however, Watt does not at all mention the "supernatural", nor does he identify its relationship with the process of intellectual and imaginative locutions. In fact, if the role of the "supernatural" is faithfully and consistently acknowledged, there would be no need to utilize the "equipment" supplied by Poulain.

It should be clear from the above discussion that Watt has attempted to substantiate essentially the views of Bell regarding the Qur'ânic *waḥy* by adopting, on the one hand, the latter's interpretation of the term *waḥy* in the Qur'ân and of the Qur'ânic passages 53:4-14 and 42:50-52 and, on the other, by twisting 'Â'ishah's (r.a.) narration of the coming of *waḥy* to the Prophet and by having recourse to the "equipment" of "intellectual locution" supplied by A Poulain. That Bell is grossly mistaken in his interpretation of the term *waḥy* has already been shown[2] by an analysis of some of the Qur'ânic passages wherein this specific term occurs in connection with the revelation of the Qur'ân. There are, however, a large number of Qur'ânic passages that speak very clearly about the nature of Qur'ânic revelation without employing the term *waḥy*. Since neither Bell nor Watt has taken into consideration these passages, it would be worthwhile to round off the present discussion by noticing some of them.

III. FURTHER QUR'ÂNIC EVIDENCE ON THE NATURE OF THE QUR'ÂNIC *WAḤY*

(1) There are more than 125 passages in the Qur'ân which speak of its having been "sent don" (*tanzîl*, تنزيل / ,*'anzalnâ* أنزلنا , *munazzal* منزّل, etc.), thereby stressing the fact that what was communicated was a specific text; for an abstract thought or idea or inspiration is not "sent down". In some of the passages, for instance 6:93, the expressions *'unzila* and *'anzala* are very

1. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
2. *Supra*, Chap. XVIII, sec. IV.

much in apposition to the expressions *'ûḥiya* and *'awḥâ.*[1] Of the 125 or so times, it is mentioned at least 34 times that Allah "sent it down" (*nazzala* نزّل and *'anzala* أنزل).[2] Again, Allah Himself speaks in the first person at least another 34 times saying "We have sent it down" (*'anzaltu* أنزلت , *'anzalnâ* أنزلنا, *nazzalnâ* نزّلنا).[3] At least 44 times it is said in the passive voice that "it has been sent down" (*'unzila* أُنزل ,*'unzilat* أُنزلت , *'nuzzila* نُزّل , *nuzzilat* نُزّلت , *yunazzalu* يُنزّل , *tunazzalu* تُنزّل).[4] And at least 14 times the Qur'ân is described as "something sent down" (*tanzîl* تنزيل , *munazzal* مُنزّل).[5] Again, to remove all doubts about it, Allah Himself bears witness on this point in unequivocal terms as follows:

﴿ لـٰكن الله يشهد بمآ أنزل إليك أنزله بعلمه والملٰئكة يشهدون وكفىٰ بالله شهيدا ﴾ (٤:١٦٦)

"But Allah bears witness that what He has sent down to you He has sent down with His knowledge (i.e. being fully aware of it); and the angels bear witness (to that), but enough is Allah for a witness." (4:166)

(2) It is similarly emphasized at least a dozen times that what has been "sent down" is in a specific language, in Arabic. For instance:

﴿ إنا أنزلنـٰـه قرءانًا عربيا ... ﴾ (١٢:٢)

"Surely We have sent it down, an Arabic Qur'ân....." (12:2)

﴿ وإنه لتنزيل رب العـٰـلمين.....بلسانٍ عربيٍّ مبين ﴾ (٢٦:١٩٢..١٩٥)

"And certainly it is a sent-down of the Lord of all the worlds...in the clear Arabic tongue." (26:192.......195).[6]

(3) That which has been sent down is collectively as well as severally des-

1. The passage runs thus:

﴿ ومن أظلم ممن افترىٰ على الله كذبًا أو قال أوحيَ إليَّ ولم يُوحَ إليه شيء ومَن قال سأُنزل مثل ما أَنزلَ الله .... ﴾ (٦:٩٣)

2. The passages are: Q. 2:29; 2:170; 2:231; 3:4; 3:7; 4:61; 4:113; 4:136; 4:166; 5:4; 5:45; 5:47; 5:48; 5:49 (2 times); 5:104; 6:91; 6:93; 6:114; 9:97; 16:2; 16:24; 16:30; 16:110; 18:1; 25:6; 31:21; 36:15; 42:15; 42:17; 47:9; 57:9; 65:5 and 65:9.

3. The passages are: Q. 2:41; 2:99; 4:105; 4:174; 5:48; 6:92; 6:115; 10:94; 12:2; 13:37; 14:1; 16:44; 17:105; 17:106; 20:2; 20:113; 21:10; 21:50; 22:16; 24:1; 24:34; 24:46; 29:47; 29:51; 38:29; 39:2; 39:41; 44:3; 58:5; 59:21; 64:8; 76:23; 97:1.

4. These passages are: أُنزل = Q. 2:4; 2:91; 2:136; 2:185; 2:285; 3:72; 3:84; 3:199; 4:60; 4:162; 5:67; 5:70; 5:71; 5:84; 5:86; 6:156; 6:157; 7:2; 7:3; 7:157; 11:14; 13:1; 13:19; 13:36; 29:46; 34:6; 38:8; 39:55; 46:30. أُنزلت = 9:86; 9:124; 9:127; 28:87; 47:20. نُزّل = 15:6; 16:44; 25:32; 43:31; 47:2. نُزّلت = 47:20. يُنزّل 2:105; 5:104. تُنزّل = 9:64.

5. These passages are: Q. 6:114; 17:106; 20:4; 26:192; 32:2; 36:5; 39:1; 40:2; 41:42; 45:2; 46:2; 56:80; 69:43; 76:23.

6. See also Q. 13:37; 16:103; 19:97; 20:113; 39:28; 41:3; 42:7; 43:3; 44:58 and 46:12.

cribed as the Book (*kitâb*) in more than a score of passages.[1] Some of these passages are as follows:

﴿تنزيل الكتـٰب لا ريب فيه من رب العـٰلمين﴾ (٣٢:٢)

"The sending down of the Book, there is no doubt in it, is from the Lord of all the worlds. (32:2)

﴿تنزيل الكتـٰب من الله العزيز الحكيم * إنا أنزلنا إليك الكتـٰب بالحق...﴾ (٣٩:١-٢)

"The sending down of the Book is from Allah, the All-Powerful, the All-Wise. Verily it is We Who have sent down the Book to you in truth...'(39:1-2)

﴿الله نزّل أحسن الحديث كتـٰبا..﴾ (٣٩:٢٣)

"Allah sent down the best speech/text as a Book."(39:23).

(4) It is to be noted that in the above quoted passage, what has been sent down is also described as "speech" or "text" (*ḥadîth* حديث). The same description occurs in other passages as well. For instance:

﴿فذرني ومن يكذب بهذا الحديث....﴾ (٦٨:٤٤)

" So leave Me and the one (i.e; leave me to deal with the one) who regards as false this text...."(68:44)

﴿فليأتوا بحديث مثله إن كانوا صـٰدقين....﴾ (٥٢:٣٤)

" So Let them the come up with a text like it, if they are truthful." (52:34)[2]

(5) Equally significant is that, what is sent down is described as Allah's "Decree" (*ḥukm*), His "Command/Order (*'amr* أمر). For instance:

﴿وكذ ٰلك أنزلنـٰه حكما عربيا...﴾ (١٣:٣٧)

"And thus We have sent it down as a decree/rescript in Arabic."(13:37)

﴿ذ ٰلك أمر الله أنزله إليكم...﴾ (٦٥:٥)

"That is the Command of Allah; He has sent it down to you..." (65:5)

(6) Equally significant is that, what is "sent down" is specifically called a *sûrah* (chapter). For instance:

﴿سورة أنزلنـٰها وفرضنٰها وأنزلنا فيها ءايـٰت بينـٰت...﴾ (٢٤:١)

"A *sûrah*, We have sent it down and have made it incumbent; and We have sent down in it clear signs..." (24:1)

1. See for instance Q. 2:176; 2:231; 3:3; 3:7; 4:105; 4:113; 4:136; 4:140; 5:48; 6:7; 6:92; 6:114; 6:155; 7:2; 7:196; 14:1; 15:6; 15:9; 16:44; 16:64; 16:89; 17:106; 18:1; 20:2; 21:10; 29:47; 29:51; 38:29; 39:2; 39:41; 42:15; 42:17; 45:2; 46:2; 46:30.

2. See also Q. 7:185; 18:6; 45:6; 53:59; 56:81 and 77:50.

﴿يحذر المنـٰفقون أن تنزل عليهم سورة...﴾ (٩:٦٤)

"The hypocrites fear lest a *sûrah* should be sent down about them". (9:64)[1]

(7) Again, that which is "sent down" is term *dhikr* (citation, account, narrative, reminder, reminiscence). For instance

﴿إنا نحن نزلنا الذكر وإنا له لحـٰفظون﴾ (١٥:٩)

"Verily it is We Who have sent down the *dhikr*; and verily it is We Who shall certainly preserve it". (15:9)

﴿وقالو يـٰأيها الذى نزل عليه الذكر إنك لمجنون﴾ (١٥:٦)

"And they say: O the one on whom the *dhikr* has been sent down, you are indeed mad". (15:6)

﴿... وأنزلنآ إليك الذكر لتبين للناس ما نزل إليهم...﴾ (١٦:٤٤)

"... And We have sent down to you the *dhikr*, in order that you explain to men what has been sent down to them". (16:44).[2]

(8) Besides the expression "sending down" there are other terms as well used in the Qur'ân to denote Qur'ânic *waḥy*. An important term in this series is *'ilqâ'*, meaning delivering, throwing, flinging, dictating, which is used in a very early passage, namely, ﴿إنا سنلقى عليك قولا ثقيلا﴾ (٧٣:٥) : "Verily We will soon throw on (deliver to) you a weighty saying (word)" (73:5). Another very early passage wherein the term occurs is: ﴿أءُلقى الذكر عليه من بيننا...﴾ (٥٤:٢٥):"Has the *dhikr* been thrown on him, of all of us?" (54:25)

(9) Of similar import is the expression *waṣṣalnâ* (وصّلنا), meaning "We have caused to reach", used in connection with the delivery of Qur'ânic *waḥy*. Thus: ﴿ولقد وصّلنا لهم القول لعلهم يتذكرون﴾ (٢٨:٥١) "And We have caused the word (saying) to reach them so that they may receive admonition". (28:51)

(10) Similarly there are a number of passages wherein the expressions *qaṣaṣnâ* (We narrated / related) and *naquṣṣu* (We narrate / relate) bear the sense of *'awḥaynâ* (We communicated) and *nûḥî* (We communicate). For instance: ﴿تلك القرىٰ نقص عليك من أنبآئها...﴾ (٧:١٠١): "Those are the towns (settlements) of which the accounts We relate to you... " (7:101). ﴿وكلا نقص عليك من أنباء الرسل...﴾ (١١:١٢٠): "And all that We narrate to you of the accounts of the messengers..." (11:120).﴿نحن نقص عليك نبأهم بالحق...﴾(١٨:١٣)"We narrate to you

1. See also Q. 9:86; 9:127 and 47:20.

2. See also Q. 7:63; 7:69; 12:104; 21:2; 21:50; 26:5; 36:11; 36:69; 38:1; 38:8; 38:49; 38:49; 38:87; 41:41; 43:5; 43:44; 54:25; 68:51; 68:52 and 81:27.

their accounts in truth..." (18:13).[1] It is noteworthy that in all these passages what is narrated / related is termed "accounts / reports" (*naba'*, *'anbâ'*).

(11) Of greater significance are the group of expressions that say "We have it read" (*nuqri'u* نقرئ), "We have read" (*qara'nâ* قرأنا) and "We recite (*natlû* نتلو) in lieu of *nûhî* and *'awhaynâ*. For instance: ﴿سنقرئك فلا تنسى﴾ (٨٧:٦) "We shall have (it) read unto you; so you shall not forget". (87:6). ﴿فإذا قرأنـه فاتبع قرءانه﴾ (٧٥:١٨): "So when We have it read/ recited, then repeat its reading / recitation". (75:18). ﴿تلك ءايـت الله نتلوها عليك بالحق...﴾ (٤٥:٦); "Those are the signs of Allah; We recite that unto you in truth..." (45:6).[2]

It should be noted that in (8) and (9) above, what is delivered to the Prophet is called *qawl* (قول), that is, "saying" or "word" of Allah.[3] This term has the same signification as those of *hadîth* (statement, saying) and *kalimât* (words) mentioned earlier. Besides, the expression *qul* (قل) occurs at least 332 times in the Qur'ân, thus emphasizing that the Messenger of Allah was given the dictation by Allah.

To sum up, there are at least half a dozen different terms used in the Qur'ân in lieu of *wahy* to denote the delivery of Qur'ânic *wahy* to the Prophet. These terms, to recapitulate, are:

(a) *'Anjalnâ* (أنزلنا): "We sent down", in various forms of the root word, and repeated statements that the Qur'ân is something "sent down" (*tanzîl, munazzal*).

(b) *Wassalnâ* (وصّلنا): "We caused to reach".

(c) *Nuqri'u / Qara'nâ* (قرأنا / نقرئ): "We have (it) read".

(d) *Natlû* (نتلو): "We recite".

(e) *Nulqî* (نلقي): "We throw / deliver".

(f) *Naqussu* (نقص): "We relate / narrate".

All these terms clearly show that what was delivered to the Prophet was in the form of specific texts. But the evidence is not confined to the import of these expressions alone. The passages containing them as also those containing the term *wahy* jointly and severally state unequivocally that what was thus delivered to the Prophet was:

1. See also Q. 4:164; 6:57; 11:100; 12:3; 16:118; 18:13; 20:99; and 40:78.
2. See also Q. 2:252; 3:28; 3:108.
3. See also Q. 18:39; 23:68; 69:40; 81:19 and 86:13.

(a) A Qur'ân (Reading / Recitation);

(b) A *Kitâb* (Book / Scripture);

(c) A *sûrah* (chapter);

(d) *Ḥadîth* (statement / saying) of Allah;

(e) *Qawl* (saying / word) of Allah;

(f) *Kalimât* (words) of Allah;

(g) *Ḥukm* (a decree / order) of Allah;

(h) *'Amr* (command) of Allah;

(i) *'Anbâ'* (accounts / narratives) given by Allah.

There are of course other terms and expressions in the Qur'ân that refer to Qur'ânic *waḥy*. It should be clear from the above, however, that the divergence between the Qur'ânic evidence on the nature of Qur'ânic *waḥy* and the orientalists' assumptions about it is irreconcilable. Thus, for instance: (a) The Qur'ân says (and authentic reports repeat the same facts) that Allah sent an angel-messenger (Jibrîl) with the Qur'ânic *waḥy* to the Prophet. The orientalists, on the other hand, would have us believe that the coming of the angel to the Prophet was "probably" an "intellectual" or even an "imaginary" vision on his part! (b) The Qur'ân says that in the initial stage of the reciept of Qur'ânic *waḥy* the Prophet used hastily to move his toungue to repeat it; but he was asked not to do so and was assured that Allah would enanble him to remember and recite the text. As against this, the orientalists would say that the Prophet's experience was "probably" an "exterior" or even an "intellectual" locution! (c) The Qur'ân says that it was Allah's "words" (*kalimât*), His "saying" (*qawl* / *ḥadîth*), a Book (*Kitâb*), that were delivered to the Prophet and that also in the "clear Arabic tongue". The orientalists would insist that the Prophet had only an "intellectual locution" "without words" and even "without any specific language!" Clearly, such assumptions do not have any support in the Qur'ân, whatever the "equipments" with which these might have been framed.

Besides the passages containing the term *waḥy* and its equivalents, there are a number of other facts mentioned in the Qur'ân that bear clearly on the nature of Qur'ânic *waḥy*. Thus (1) the Qur'ân itself, and therefore the Prophet also, strongly and repeatedly deny the allegation made by the unbelievers that it was his own composition. It is stated that none could be a worse sinner than the one who himself composed a text and then falsely attri-

buted it to Allah and that if the Prophet did so he could not have averted severe punishment for that offence[1]. (2) Closely connected with this repeated denial of the allegation is the challenge which the Qur'ân (and therefore the Prophet) throws to the detractors of all times to come up with a text like that of the Qur'ân. It must be noted that this challenge is not an item of the so-called subsequently developed Islamic orthodoxy but very much in the Qur'ân itself.[2] This challenge still remains open; but the very fact that it was made at the time means that the Qur'ân and the Prophet denied the allegation of his having composed it. (3) The Qur'ân also shows that the unbelievers of the time indirectly admitted that it was not really the Prophet's own composition; for when they realized that he was incapable of composing it himself they came up with the alternative allegation that others had composed it for him. That allegation too was quickly denied and rebutted.[3] (4) Another indirect admission on their part was that though they asked the Prophet to produce some specified miracles they could not conceal their surprise at the extraordinary nature of the Qur'ânic text. Thus whenever a *sûrah* or Qur'ânic passage was given out to them they came out with the remark that it was "a clear sorcery", "a magic" ﴿سحر مبين﴾.[4] This shows that they did not at all consider the Qur'ânic texts to be like the ordinary speech of the Prophet, nor did they think them to be in any way comparable with the literary compositions they were habituated to hearing.

(5) It is also noteworhty that the unbelievers repeatedly asked the Messenger of Allah to give them a different Qur'ân or to change it. In reply he told them very clearly that it was not within his power to change even a word of what was *waḥy*-ied to him and that he was himself to follow it to the word. With reference to this demand of the unbelievers the Qur'ân states:

﴿وإذا تتلىٰ عليهم ءاياتنا بينـٰـت قال الذين لا يرجون لقاءنا ائت بقرءانٍ غيرِ هـٰـذا أو بـدّلهُ قل ما يكون لِى أن أبـدّلـه من تلقآيِٕ نفسِى إن أتبع إلا ما يُوحىٰ إلىَّ...﴾ (١٠:١٥)

"And when Our clear signs (*'âyahs*) are recited unto them, those who do not entertain any hope of meeting Us say: 'Bring us a Qur'ân (Reading / Recitation) other than this, or change it.' Say: 'It is not for me that I can change it from myself (on my

1. Q. 3:94; 6:21; 6:93; 6:144; 7:37; 10:17; 10:37-38; 10:69; 11:13; 11:18; 11:35; 16:116; 18:15; 21:5; 25:4; 29:68; 32:3; 42:24; 46:8; 61:7 and 69:44-47.

2. Q. 2:23; 11:13; 52:34.

3. Q. 16:103. See also *supra*, Ch. XI, sec. IV.

4. See for instance Q. 5:110; 6:7; 10:76; 11:7; 21:3; 27:13; 34:43; 37:15; 43:30; 46:7; 52:2; 6:16 and 74:24.

own accord). I follow naught but what is *waḥy*-ied to me.'" (10:15)

The last sentence in the above passage is also very significant. Not only that the Prophet did not compose the Qur'ân nor was free to change a word of it, he himself was subject to its dictates and injunctions.[1]

(6) Again, the pre-prophetic life of the Messenger of Allah is cited in bringing home the fact that the Qur'ân was none of his composition. Thus the *'âyah* that immediately follows the one quoted above states:

﴿قل لو شاء الله ما تلوته عليكم ولا أدرىكم به فقد لبثت فيكم عُمُراً من قبله أفلا تعقلون﴾ (١٠ :١٦)

"Say: 'If Allah had so willed, I should not have recited it unto you; nor would He have made it known to you. A whole life-time before this have I spent amongst you. Do you not then understand?" (10:16)

This passage actually calls attention to three important matters. First, it refers to his previous character and conduct in general, specially his acknowledged truthfulness and integrity, thus stressing the fact that he was not the sort of a person who would, all of a sudden, appear before his community with a false claim about himslef and also about the teachings he was giving out to them. Second, it draws attention to the fact that for at least forty years of his life prior to his call he had never shown any desire to be a leader of his people nor had expressed any intention to carry out a socio-religious reform of his society. Third and most important of all, he had never exhibited any literary skill or ambition and had never before the coming of *waḥy* to him composed a single sentence of literary Arabic. This fact is decisive; for it is common knowledge that a person who has no literary experience or training cannot all of a sudden produce first class, or rather incomparable literary compositions even if he is supplied with the ideas and facts from another source.

(7) The Qur'ân also contains a number of statements about scientific facts the meaning and significance of which are becoming clear with the progress of scientific knowledge in recent times.[2] This shows that the Prophet or any one of his alleged assistants could not have composed the texts.

(8) Last but not least, the fact of the *fatrah* or pause in the coming of *waḥy*, as mentioned earlier, demonstrates clearly that it did not in any way emanate from the Prophet's personality nor was it a product of his consciousness. Had it been so, there would have been no *fatrah* and no cause for the

1. See also Q. 6:106; 7:203 and 46:9.
2. *Supra*, Ch. XII, sec. II.

Prophet's restlessness and sadness on that account.

Thus the Qur'ân strongly and in various ways contradicts that the Qur'ânic *waḥy* was in the nature of "suggestion" or "intellectual locution" without any words or any definite language. In fact the orientalist's approach to the subject seems to suffer from a basic contradiction. He appears to profess himself a believer in God, angels and their coming with His words and messages to the Old and New Testament Prophets and other personages; but in dealing with Muḥammad (ﷺ) and the Qur'ân he slips away from the position of a believer and takes a secularist stance in that he in effect argues that since the phenomena of an angel's coming with God's word to a Prophet or God's communicating His words to him in other ways do not appear to be in accord with ordinary human understanding and experience, the Qur'ân's and Muḥammad's (ﷺ) statements to such effects should be interpreted with the help of "mystic", psychological and "philosophical" equipments. Even then, the modern orientalist appears to be aware that what he adduces as the evidences of the Qur'ân and traditions about the nature of Qur'ânic *waḥy* is mostly forced, unnatural and "tendential shaping" of the texts and facts and that there still remains much in both the sources that contradicts his assumptions. Hence, to make up the deficiency, he has had recourse to the advertisemnet of the Prophet's sincerity in order to deny the truth of what he says. The Prophet was sincere, it is said, and he conscientiously believed in what he said, but he was nonetheless mistaken in what he believed and said. He said the Qur'ânic *waḥy* was a verbal communication of the texts in Arabic. The orientalist says: "No, the Prophet only sincerely believed and thought it to be so; but actually he received some ideas and thoughts —it was only a matter of his own mind and intellect, an aspect of his special consciousness, an imaginative or intellectual locution. He even at times 'induced' the receipt of such suggestions and ideas". The statements of the Qur'ân and of Muḥammad (ﷺ) on the one hand, and those of the modern orientalist, on the other, are thus poles apart. It is difficult to see how these views are in any way different from what the Quraysh unbelievers used to say before their acceptance of Islam that the Qur'ânic *waḥy* was the Prophet's "medleys of dreams" (*'aḍghâth 'aḥlâm*),[1] or what William Muir said that it was the Prophet's "trance utterances" or what Bell said that it was the natural conclusion which comes into one's mind after prolonged deliberation and con-

1. Q. 21:5.

sideration over a certain matter. In their views regarding the Qur'ân and the Qur'ânic *waḥy*, thus, the modern orientalists stand in effect on the same plane where the Makkan unbelievers stood some fourteen hundred years ago and where William Muir and his contemporaries stood a century and a half ago.

إنّ وزارة الشؤون الإسلامية والأوقاف والدعوة والإرشاد

في المملكة العربية السعودية

المشرفة على مجمّع الملك فهد

لطباعة المصحف الشريف في المدينة المنورة

إذ يسرّها أن يصدر المجمّع بالتعاون مع

الجامعة الإسلامية بالمدينة المنورة هذه الطبعة

من كتاب

سيرة النبي ﷺ والمستشرقون (العهد المكي)

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خادم الحرمين الشريفين الملك فهد بن عبد العزيز آل سعود

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rewards for his ceaseless efforts to disseminate the
Noble Book of Allah, and the Sunnah and Sîrah of
His Messenger ﷺ.
And Allah is the Bestower of guidance.

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